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BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

SECOND SERIES

LOVE AND GEOGRAPHY (GEOGRAFI OG KJAERLIGHED)
BEYOND HUMAN MIGHT (OVER EVNE: ANNET STYKKE)
LABOREMUS (LABOREMUS)

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that Björnson was the first dramatist who —in "A Business Failure" (*En Fallit*)—succeeded in creating a genuine home atmosphere on the stage. And speaking of "Love and Geography," the late Henrik Jæger, Norway's foremost literary historian, had this to say: "Björnson is as consistent in his glorification of the home and the family as is Ibsen in raising the personality, the individual, to the skies. . . . In the name of personal self-expression, Ibsen lets a wife leave her home to seek by herself a way toward clearness and independence; in the name of the home, Björnson brings an estranged married couple back into each other's arms."

This intense feeling for home and home ties asserts itself in all of Björnson's work. It was part of his nature and may to some extent have been derived from his peasant ancestry. Whenever he refers to this side of man's existence, his voice seems to grow mellower, his imagination more vivid. Few have surpassed him in the power of endowing a domestic interior with that warm light which flows from an open fire in the gloaming, when there is no other light to rival it. And he seemed to have a special genius for presenting every kind of relationship based on blood-kindred in the most attractive colours. In illustration may be quoted the exquisite scene between brother and sister in the second act of "Beyond Human Might."

It would not be safe, however, to conclude that "Love and Geography" is a sermon preached on behalf of the home as opposed—one might say—to the individuals within it.

Björnson's concern for the right of every personality to expand freely in accordance with the laws and tendencies of its own nature was hardly less eager than that of Ibsen. And it will be as correct, in considering the first play of the present volume, to place the emphasis on *Karen Tygesen's* initial revolt as on her final regrets at having revolted. It is true that the play, as it progresses, increasingly accentuates the dangers to which all the members of a family become exposed through the weakening of their sense of unity and community. But nevertheless its ultimate lesson seems likely to be that a home which does not offer reasonable freedom to all its members is doomed to perish.

In a way the attitude taken by Björnson in this work may be considered old-fashioned, as he persists in regarding woman as primarily man's helpmate. But within these limits he is radical and modern enough to satisfy the most advanced demands. The play, we must remember, was written in 1885, when we had barely begun to feel the economic revolution which since then has swept so many millions of women from their old domestic moorings into the whirlpool of industrial competition. It was only natural that, at such a time, Björnson might still accept the home as "woman's sphere." And it is the more to his credit that, even at that time, he refused to make it her prison.

The note struck from the first is one of protest against the selfish tendency of the artist or the thinker to consider his work as an end in itself, and as such superior to the life which it ought to be serving. A play of much later date and outlook having very much in common with "Love and Geography" is Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman." The central theme of both is the same, no matter how much the two treatments of it may differ. And the outcome is pretty much the same in both cases, for the submission of

John Tanner to marriage is essentially the equivalent of *Professor Tygesen's* withdrawal of matters geographical from all home precincts not specifically set aside for his own use. And both surrenders mean in the last analysis that the individual's right to free development becomes meaningless whenever it threatens to defeat the higher rights of the race or of life itself.

Like so many other plays by Björnson, this one has been worked over in the course of the years. Originally the part of *Henning* was much more conspicuous, and a great deal more stress was laid on the dangers at his hands to which both mother and daughter became exposed through the breaking up of the home. To the distinct advantage of the play, this element in its plot has been toned down and pushed into the background. As the play stands now, it brings home to us very forcibly one of the most notable qualities of Björnson's dramatic work: the charm, the jolly large-heartedness, the contagious good humour which he infused into so many of his characters. It was so much a part of his own nature that he seems to have expected its presence in everybody else. And the withholding of it was the worst judgment he could pass on one of his characters.

To our surprise and pleasure, we meet with this quality even in a man like *Pastor Sang* in "Beyond Our Power," whom very few playwrights could have made anything but a splenetic prude. We find it overflowing in a character like *Professor Tygesen*, and its presence alone prevents him from sinking wholly to the level of the typical domestic tyrant. *Tygesen* is not only a man of imagination, but a man with a keen sense of humour. Even at his worst, there is a glimmer of mischief in the corner of his eye. He loves to tease—perhaps his love of it is largely at the bottom of all the trouble. His mind is naturally turned outward in eager study of a

vast, multiform world. And so the reconciliation between him and his wife is rendered not only possible but probable. It is well recognised that in *Tygesen* Björnson was caricaturing himself, and for this reason the part has always been played in a make-up suggestive of the author.

"Love and Geography" is very broad comedy, turning in spots into outright farce. Yet it is as serious in purpose and as close to life in all its bearings as the most tear-dripping tragedy. This is another constantly recurring characteristic of Björnson's work—and one, I think, that should make him particularly attractive to the English-speaking public: he can discuss problems without raving, and preach sermons without whining. He is so strong, so full of life, that he can afford to smile in the presence of serious difficulties—confident as he is that mankind sooner or later will overcome any difficulty against which it brings its full energy to bear.

In this, as in many other respects, Björnson came closer to the American spirit than any other one of the great Scandinavian writers of the last century. He himself was always conscious of this kinship, and it was with the joy of a child that he set out for the United States in September, 1880, to stay there eight months. While travelling through the country he seems to have been constantly struck by a democratic spirit that found its expression not only in political institutions, but in the terms on which man met man everywhere—even within the walls of a prison. One day he was taken to visit the Massachusetts State Prison at Concord, his host and guide being Governor John Davis Long. A convict, hearing of the presence of the chief executive within the prison, asked the privilege of a talk with him in order that he might appeal for pardon. This talk took place in the warden's office, and to Björnson's intense surprise and delight the first thing done by the governor was to make the convict sit down on a chair

close to his own. Björnson wrote home of this scene, adding some memories of a very different nature: King Oscar seated at a dining-table while his host, Count Wedel—the country's foremost citizen at the time—was waiting on him without being permitted to sit down once during the lengthy meal; a cabinet minister keeping an official from his department standing for thirty minutes while delivering a report; and so on.

In mentioning this, I have more than its anecdotal interest in mind. I wish to make it easier for non-Scandinavian readers to understand those scenes in "Beyond Human Might" where *Holger* and the workmen come in direct contact with each other. To American readers in particular, the arrogance of *Holger* before the catastrophe and the cringing humility of the workmen after it may seem equally exaggerated. But at the time when the play was written, in 1895, the modern labour movement had not yet gained its present hold on the Scandinavian countries. Since then things have changed tremendously. But then the sharp line between upper and lower class was still practically intact, and the attitude of employer toward employee was frequently one of unbearable insolence. The scene in the third act of "Beyond Human Might," though somewhat theatrical in its defiant speeches, is in spirit largely true to the life of that day.

Industrialism was then young in all the Scandinavian countries, but especially in Norway. On his own ground the peasant retained his ancient independence of spirit and manners. But turned into a city workman he lost his old class pride as well as the sense of strength springing from an immediate relation to the main sources of human sustenance. Dragged from his native soil, he fell for a while into a state of abject subservience, out of which the best of his class could save themselves only by emigration. To Björnson every

phase of this spectacle was a constant cause of provocation, and he strove through a long lifetime to force the educated and propertied classes into assuming a juster and wiser attitude toward those on whose toil their own prosperity and supposed superiority finally rested.

"Beyond Human Might"—as, for several reasons, it has been found expedient to name the present version of the second of the two plays which Björnson named "Beyond Our Power"—is not, however, primarily a treatment of the relationship between capital and labour, or between employer and employee. At its heart lies the same cry that rings so passionately out of the previous play with the same original name (*Over Evne*): Björnson's protest against the tyranny of the supernatural, the infinite, the "boundless." At one time able to accept established Christianity as a sufficient formulation of life's highest truths, he had been led by the reading of Darwin, Spencer, Mill, and Comte to take a new position, whence the Christian placing of life's purpose beyond all life actually known to man seemed the greatest obstacle ever interposed between mankind and a happier existence.

What he had come to feel as a menacing peril as well as a hampering clog was man's tendency to waste his energy, his passion, his faith, on problems which, at the best, could merely furnish his mental faculties with a fascinating game, while at the same time he was slighting or wholly neglecting his actual environing conditions. Björnson had come to feel that man was everlastingly hoping to achieve through a miracle, through some one world-shaking event, what could only be conquered step by step through age-long, unremitting, well-directed toil. And so he had come to hate and dread that queer streak in man's make-up—that "craving for the boundless"—which seemed all the time to take the ground from under his reason at the moment when he most

needed it. And whether the expected miracle was religious or political, spiritual or social, made no difference to him. In each and every case he found it a veil thrown between man and his actual goal—if not a new abyss opening beside his already sufficiently dangerous path.

"Our consciences can be no reliable guides to us," declares *Bratt* in the second act, "for they have never been at home on earth or in the present. We are always striving for Utopias, for the boundless——"

"Can you imagine anything more cruel," cries *Rachel* in the last act, "than a power within ourselves that goads us on to that which our whole nature resists? How can happiness be possible on this earth until our reasoning faculties become so spontaneous that no one can use us like that?"

Throughout this play as well as the earlier one, it is *Rachel* who acts as spokesman for the author. The choice of a woman for this part is not exceptional with Björnson. On the contrary, like Ibsen, he was always making women his mouthpieces. This was characteristic of his view of woman as nearer to the fountainhead of life, as more in accord with its fundamental purposes. She was to him not a being superior to the male, but an indispensable corrective without which the masculine tendencies toward experiment and abstraction would send the world flying into uncharted and unlivable regions.

As I have already mentioned, this play bears in the original the same name as "Beyond Our Power." It is a sequel but can hardly be called a second part. The two plays are wholly independent of each other. It is not necessary to read one in order to understand or enjoy the other, although a knowledge of the earlier play will add to the appreciation —and probably also facilitate the understanding—of the later. Four of the characters in the first play reappear in the sequel.

They are *Elias* and *Rachel*, *Bratt*, and *Falk*. In each case the later play shows a logical development of temperamental traits already indicated in the earlier one. Of the new characters in "Beyond Human Might," two—*Credo* and *Spera*—may appear dangerously fantastic to many readers. They are nevertheless irresistibly charming. And like so much else in the play, they are symbolical rather than real. They are the future, the new mankind, stripped of all futile dreams—and, therefore, the richer in dreams that may come true. Nor must *Credo's* various plans for the improvement of human existence be taken too literally. It is the spirit of the whole thing—the glowing faith that shines through it—which should furnish us with inspiration, no matter how insufficient or even childish any detail of the boy's programme may appear to us. Like all the world's greatest dreamers, Björnson was too brave or too innocent to stop before the risk of seeming ridiculous. And if the inventions on which *Credo* reared his young hope should strike many as rather too materialistic, that must be accepted as a part of Björnson's own reaction against the days when he, like *Bratt*, "spent his time wool-gathering in another world."

To make it easier for the reader to follow the action, which is not always as clearly indicated as might be desirable, I want to point out that *Halden*, the architect, is revealed to us—by hints rather than by open statements—as the natural son of *Holger* and as the man who has instigated the deed of *Elias*.

"Laboremus"—"Let us work"—is an intense psychological study, having for its central figure the striking character of *Lydia*, the "Undine." This ultra-modern adventuress is the embodiment of a principle which Björnson repeatedly attacked during the later part of his life: that principle of overgrown, unconscionable, anti-social individualism which has its main roots in the misconstrued philosophies of

Stirner and Nietzsche. Among the youth of Europe during the last decades of the century, Björnson found this principle worshipped as an excuse for turning their alleged search after self-expression into unscrupulous self-seeking, and in one work after another he gave battle against tendencies so hostile to all that was most sacred to himself. The basic theme of the play "At Storhove" (*På Storhove*), for instance, is almost identical with that of "Laboremus." But, for all his burning antipathy, Björnson was too much the artist not to make the figure of *Lydia* appealingly human, and more than one critic has found her the most attractive character in the play.

Technically considered, the play strikes one especially by a quality which may be designated as "close-knit." It contains only five persons, not counting a few shadowy hotel servants, and for a few brief moments only, during the entire three acts, does the stage hold more than two persons at the same time. All these persons do is to talk. But what revelations come to us out of their talking; what lurid flashes of ordinarily hidden soul-depths are laid bare to us; and what vistas of action—even of action in the sense of bodily movement—are thrown open to us! Of all Björnson's plays, this is probably the one in which he approached most closely and most successfully to the methods characteristic of Ibsen. On the other hand, the principal objection to the play will be found in its musical symbolism, which at points is carried so far that the reader finds some difficulty in following. But there is not enough of this to mar fatally a work otherwise so instinct with fascination. Viewed in its entirety, rather than in detail, it impresses us with an air of artistic and intellectual grace that has few parallels in the drama of to-day.

LOVE AND GEOGRAPHY

(GEOGRAFI OG KJÆRLIGHED)

1885

CHARACTERS

Professor Tygesen
Karen, *his wife*
Helga, *their daughter*
Mrs. Birgit Romer
Professor Turman
Henning, *an artist*
Miss Malla Rambek
Ane, *a servant girl*

LOVE AND GEOGRAPHY
(GEOGRAFI OG KJÆRLIGHED)

ACT I

A large room with windows at the left. There is a door in the opposite wall leading to PROFESSOR TYGESEN'S *study. In the centre of the rear wall a huge doorway opens on a wide hall. It is hung on both sides with heavy draperies. A stairway, laid with thick carpets and leading to an upper floor, rises from the centre of the hall. Back of the stairway is a door leading down to the cellar.*

The hall and the stairway have the appearance of belonging to a museum. The same is partly true of the room itself. Most of the objects crowded into the place are ethnographical specimens.

There is a long table on either side of the doorway, and both of these tables are covered with open books and strips of paper arranged in little piles, with a stone on top of each pile.

At the right, in the foreground, stands a sofa with a table in front of it. A woman's sewing things are on the table. An easel with a canvas showing the portrait of a woman stands in the foreground at the left. The room contains also a number of chairs, a tall mirror, and other furniture, all of it in excellent taste.

The door in the rear is open and laughter is heard from the hall outside as the curtain rises. Then MRS. KAREN TYGESEN *and* MRS. BIRGIT ROMER *appear in the hall.*

KAREN. I didn't recognise you, at once.

BIRGIT. But I knew you—oh, before I saw you!

KAREN. Ha, ha, ha!

BIRGIT. Yes, it was by that laugh I knew you. It hasn't changed at all in seventeen years.

KAREN. Ah—as if you didn't know we were living here!

[*Both come into the room.*

BIRGIT. I should have known you by that laugh if I had heard it in Australia.—Yes, you *have* been to Australia, too, haven't you?

KAREN. Where haven't we been? Ha, ha, ha!

BIRGIT. Ha, ha, ha! You make me laugh, too. My, but this is nice! [*They embrace and kiss each other*] How you have kept young, Karen!

KAREN. How about yourself? You look almost like a girl.

BIRGIT. I must return the compliment.

KAREN. I knew it wouldn't be long before you turned up.

BIRGIT. Of course, you have heard that we inherited the old family place.

KAREN. The "Horseshoe"—the marvel of our childhood?

BIRGIT. Yes!

KAREN. I go out there at least once a week.

BIRGIT. To the "Horseshoe"?

KAREN. That is, I pass it on my way to the school.

BIRGIT. Oh, yes, there is a boarding-school for girls not far from us.

KAREN. And that's where our daughter is.

BIRGIT. Is she? You have only one child—and keep her in a boarding-school?

KAREN. Oh, it's such a splendid school. And besides, it wasn't good for her to be at home. My husband must have quiet.

BIRGIT. Of course, she isn't very far away—only an hour's drive.

KAREN. Yes, I visit her every Sunday.

BIRGIT. And she was in town yesterday, wasn't she?

KAREN. Helga?—No.

BIRGIT. I noticed a couple of girls at the theatre last night, and a lady sitting next to me remarked that one of them looked like your daughter.

KAREN. Looked like Helga?

BIRGIT. That's the way I happened to hear that you were living here.

KAREN. Yes, we have been living here about a year now.

BIRGIT. But I didn't know it before. I got here only the day before yesterday. And out at the "Horseshoe" there was only one room in which the paint had had time to dry—the one with the big bay window, you remember.

KAREN. The one that was haunted?

BIRGIT. Yes, the one that was haunted. We can get to it only by walking on boards. I should like to know what kind of paint they use here in Norway—it never seems to dry. We stick in it like flies.—Well, so I went back to the hotel. And having to stay in the city, I thought I would go to the theatre and look for some familiar faces—especially as it was Sunday.

KAREN. Yes, so did we.

BIRGIT. The house was full. I got a front seat in one of the boxes. Everybody stared at me, and nobody recognised me. Of course, I was using my opera-glasses most of the time while the curtain was down.

KAREN. Well, how did it strike you?

BIRGIT. It made me feel as if I might just as well have been gone a hundred years. Most of it was new—so very new! But there was also much that never seems to change. There

was Mrs. Holm in the orchestra, just as soft and round and cosey as ever—only it wasn't Mrs. Holm, but her daughter, our little friend Augusta. And there was Mrs. Holm's old mother, just as thin and withered and fond of the show as ever—only it wasn't Mrs. Holm's mother, but Mrs. Holm herself.

KAREN. Ha, ha—that's just the way it is!

BIRGIT. And if there had been any change at all, it meant only—well, for instance, that the big nose of the Bruns had shifted its place. Now you find it on the moon-faces of the Torpes.

KAREN. Ha, ha!—There has been a lot of marrying between those two families.

BIRGIT. But what I did know wasn't a circumstance to what I didn't.

KAREN. Yes, did you ever see anything like it? Most of the people here are newcomers.

BIRGIT. We Norwegians must be a dreadfully restless lot.

KAREN. On our travels we have found Norwegians everywhere—that is, where there was any water.—But you said there was somebody there who looked like Helga?

BIRGIT. Yes, there was.—Really, I think I'll have to take off my coat.

KAREN. Do, please!

BIRGIT. I started out early this morning, and it was quite cold then. And now—what sudden changes you have here!

KAREN. I imagine the weather is a little sharper than it used to be at Odessa?

BIRGIT. Oh, it could be sharp enough down there.

KAREN. Let me take your coat.

BIRGIT. Oh, no!

[She puts it on one of the long tables by the door.

KAREN *cries out.*

BIRGIT. Mercy, what's the matter?

KAREN. My husband's notes—his excerpts! You've put your coat on those he's using just now!—Heavens, there he comes now! [*She moves the coat hurriedly to a chair.*

BIRGIT. I'll be glad to see him again.

KAREN. [*Going to the door and looking out*] No, it wasn't anybody.

BIRGIT. It wasn't anybody, you say?

KAREN. No, but he'll be here in a moment now.

BIRGIT. But, dear, why has he got all his notes lying around here?

KAREN. He hasn't got room for them in there.

She picks up the coat carefully and hangs it over the back of a chair.

BIRGIT. And all these stones here?

KAREN. We'll have to put them back, each one on its own pile. There! It's to keep the notes from getting mixed up. —This is Russia.

BIRGIT. Russia?

KAREN. That's what he is writing about now. And while it lasts, the whole house is in Russia.—You might have caused a lot of trouble.

BIRGIT. Well, they have plenty of it over there.

KAREN. All these are notes on the languages in Russia.

BIRGIT. Oh, I see.

KAREN. He is busy on the languages just now. And you can't imagine what a lot of them there are.

BIRGIT. Suppose I should take it into my head to mix up all these languages?

KAREN. It wouldn't be a joking matter, I tell you.— There, now! I hope everything is as it was——

BIRGIT. Before the confounding of the languages.

KAREN. Ha, ha! It's such fun that you haven't changed the least little bit!

BIRGIT. Is that so? [*They come forward again, but stop in front of the windows*] How beautiful this land of ours is! I don't see how I could have forgotten it. Perhaps I had never noticed it. I was so very young when I left.

KAREN. Yes, it is beautiful.

BIRGIT. And what a spring! I feel as if I had never seen a spring before.

KAREN. And yet some people say we have no spring at all.

BIRGIT. Then it must be the summer that looks like spring. Really, I must make a tour of the country. They tell me there are places surpassing even this one in beauty.

KAREN. Yes, here you'll find prettiness and grandeur side by side.

BIRGIT. Now, for instance, that young leafage, and that greensward over there—did you ever see anything more delicate? And the colour of it! And the colour on the hills! What life there is in it!—But the people look as if they were not very happy.

KAREN. Not happy enough to suit *you*.

BIRGIT. They look as if they were going out to the cemetery to put flowers on a grave.—Oh, dear, do you paint?

KAREN. No, I am being painted. I'll move the easel forward a little, so you can see.

BIRGIT. But that's the work of a master.

KAREN. Yes, he is a master. You must have seen his name quite often—Henning.

BIRGIT. Oh, Henning! But it's excellent, Karen!

KAREN. You think so——?

BIRGIT. Is it possible that he's in love with you?

KAREN. Why, the idea—! Ha, ha!

BIRGIT. But there is something about the way he has seen you— And then you brightened up all of a sudden——

KAREN. Did I?

BIRGIT. You know, there is something about painting that makes it so easy to slip.

KAREN. But, Birgit! You don't speak from personal experience, do you?

BIRGIT. Partly. Once I met a painter who was abroad "studying." He was married—but I am not quite sure he knew to whom.

KAREN. Well, this one is not married.

BIRGIT. Perhaps not—but he's so very susceptible.

KAREN. How do you know?

BIRGIT. I saw him at the theatre last night.

KAREN. Henning?

BIRGIT. He was there with those two little girls I spoke of. And so I had to hear a thing or two about him.

KAREN. From whom?

BIRGIT. [*While she continues to study the portrait*] From that lady sitting next to me. In one of the other boxes I noticed two young girls and a man who were laughing and having an awfully good time. I noticed them during the first entr'acte, and again during the second, and so I asked about them. The girls were sitting as far back as they could get in order not to be seen. And I was told that one of them looked very much like your daughter.

KAREN. No, Helga wasn't there—of course, they wouldn't let her go to the theatre without our permission. You know, it's really a very fine school.

BIRGIT. All right—that's the way I learned you were here, however. Everybody knows your husband. He's apparently quite famous.

KAREN. Yes, he has become so in the last few years.

BIRGIT. I remember seeing his name in one of the Italian reviews not long ago. But he's such a queer fellow, I have been told.

KAREN. Really? Ha, ha! Who told you?

BIRGIT. I don't remember. Oh, yes, I can name one—my husband.

KAREN. Well, here he comes, so you can judge for yourself.

BIRGIT. Is that he out in the hall?

KAREN. Yes, that's he. He has had his morning walk.

TYGESEN. [*Outside*] Tooteroo — tooteroo — tooroo! [*Appearing in the doorway*] What weather! It's just raining sunlight! And then the fragrance! [*He starts for his room.*

KAREN. But don't you see——?

TYGESEN. What?—oh!

KAREN. My husband—Mrs. Birgit Romer.

TYGESEN. Birgit—Romer? That means, Birgit Hamre! Married to old man Romer at Odessa—the fellow with the skull-cap and the two parrots in that big, cool room with the tiled floor. We stayed there a whole week—but you were not at home.

BIRGIT. Yes, it was provoking.

TYGESEN. Of course, it was provoking!—And now you come flying from the Black Sea. To settle down at the "Horseshoe." Lord, but that place is wonderfully situated among the hills out there! Leaning on its arms, so to speak, and taking in the view. [*He rests his chin on his folded hands in illustration*] Our little girl is in the school out there. A splendid school!—Well, dear lady, when did you get here?—Wait a moment: I must have a real look at you!

KAREN. My husband is very near-sighted.

TYGESEN. Those confounded field-glasses—on my travels, you know—they've clear pulled the eyes out of my head. Therefore—why, you are nothing but a girl.

BIRGIT. That's what I have been saying of your wife.

TYGESEN. Karen? Married at sixteen—has a daughter of sixteen—twice sixteen makes thirty-two. That's what Karen is—thirty-two. Of course, we have to take off the year before Helga was born.

BIRGIT. Add it, you mean?

TYGESEN. Beg your pardon! Add it—that's what we have to do. Consequently, Karen is nearly thirty-three. So there you see!

BIRGIT. And I am quite thirty-five.

TYGESEN. Are you? But Karen looks older than you.

BIRGIT. You must be very near-sighted.

TYGESEN. Really?—Let me see!

KAREN *evades him and goes out into the hall, leaving the door open behind her.*

TYGESEN. She doesn't dare! That's what I expected.—Oh, we walked too far to-day, and I got too hot. I hope you'll excuse me, madam, for not taking off my hat. I have to keep it on, and my coat also, till I can change. It was Turman's fault. Hang Turman! I couldn't make him understand me. The fact is, he has no imagination at all. And without imagination there can be no new discoveries: that's what I always say. But what does Turman do? Of course, he remembers everything he has ever laid eyes on, and so he pieces it together in dry-as-dust fashion—all that's known about that one thing. Just now it's Ishtar. The goddess Ishtar, you know. There has been a lot of controversy about her—an awful lot. And so he searches all the Babylonian and Assyrian myths for every word, every line, every sign referring to Ishtar. And in that way, you see—by putting it together just as you put together a jig-saw puzzle——

BIRGIT. I understand——

TYGESEN. And by taking away all later poetical additions —for in all myths, you know, there are poetical elements which have been added later——

BIRGIT. Of course.

TYGESEN. In that way he brings out the original image. What do you think of that?

BIRGIT. It's very ingenious.

TYGESEN. Of course, it's ingenious. Turman is quite a big man. And do you know what he has discovered in that way?

BIRGIT. Not me, I hope. [*Pause.*

KAREN. [*Who has returned in the meantime*] How could that interest Birgit?

TYGESEN. Ha, ha, ha! I guess not! This comes from having had to swallow so much of Turman's talk. Now it's running over. [KAREN *goes into* TYGESEN'S *study*] We always take our morning walk together, Turman and I, and we take turns talking—I one day, and he the next. To-day it was his day.—Geography and philology are more nearly related than most people think. It was the study of languages that led me into geography. I began as a philologist. But always while at work on my languages, especially the old ones, it was as if I had heard the distant roaring of the sea in one—as if I had heard that long-drawn, melancholy soughing of the waves—and that incessant gentle lapping. And in another I would hear the echoes rolling between the hills—popping and leaping and laughing. And then the languages of the big plains—full of heavy, monotonous trudging and something that sounded like the tramp of horses and the rattle of carts. And in that way I saw landscapes and habits of life emerging from the languages. It tempted me. I had to read about the countries inhabited by those peoples. I got so deep into it—that I had to stay forever. Well, well!—The sound, the

phonetic element, caught hold of my imagination from the start. But Turman hasn't the least sense for it. Not a vestige of it. He makes me mad! But, Lord, what doesn't he know! Mountains of memorised facts!—Yes, in spite of all, I have the deepest admiration for Turman. I look up things in him as if——

BIRGIT. Is he married?

KAREN. [*Who is just coming in*] Ha, ha!

TYGESEN. Karen, she asks if Turman is married!

KAREN. No, he was born a bachelor.

TYGESEN. If you had ever seen him—for a moment only—you would never have asked that question. Turman comes from the Sæter valley.[1] He looks like a seal. Everybody from that district does. And he was brought up at Christiansand—a city where there is nothing but women.

BIRGIT. Well——?

TYGESEN. Oh, of course, there are a few men in the place, too. But a fellow from Sæter, who is dumped into Christiansand to get his upbringing—eh? He has hated women ever since. Turman has never in his life been mortgaged to anybody—not for a single hour even—that's the plain truth.

KAREN. Hadn't you better go in and change now?

TYGESEN. Right away. Although, of course, I keep pretty warm talking like this.—So you have come to live here?—Well, what do you think of the spring here in Norway?

BIRGIT. Oh——!

TYGESEN. Yes, isn't it—? And you are not going away again at once?

BIRGIT. I'll be here all summer.

TYGESEN. You've no children waiting for you, have you?

BIRGIT. No.

[1] A district in the southeastern corner of Norway.

TYGESEN. Do you know, I have just been thinking of a quick trip down in your direction.

BIRGIT. Down to Odessa?

TYGESEN. Not quite. But to Bessarabia.

BIRGIT. Why, that's next door to us.

TYGESEN. Well, yes.—I have just received an article that makes me question what I have seen with my own eyes. Who is right? Can my own eyes have been at fault? Just a flying visit—and the whole matter would be settled.

BIRGIT. But if you wait, we can go together.

TYGESEN. No, there's no time to lose.

BIRGIT. Why?

TYGESEN. Russia is in the press now. I have got far beyond that whole matter. And I can't turn back. Kishinev—that's as far as I need go to settle it.

BIRGIT. Only that far?

TYGESEN. Perhaps not even that far. Once I was there alone. Karen and Helga had stayed at Budapest. Then I dreamt of my mother. I only dream of mother when something is happening. Never at any other time.

BIRGIT. How strange!

TYGESEN. Not so very strange. One's mother—that means the family.

BIRGIT. Had anything happened?

TYGESEN. That morning I telegraphed—and in the afternoon I had a reply saying that just then—which meant the day after the dream—both of them had been in serious danger. And Helga was not well.

BIRGIT. And you hurried back to Budapest?

TYGESEN. Of course I did!

BIRGIT. I knew your mother. She used to collect plants and insects.

TYGESEN. My mother taught me to see. She saved my childish imagination from all nonsense and directed it toward life itself. What I am I owe to mother. You see, Mrs. Romer—a mother doesn't give us life only once, but a thousand times.

KAREN. Hadn't you better go and change now?

TYGESEN. You're right! You're right!—Pardon me, madam. It's impossible to be too careful. And I haven't time to be sick, I tell you.

BIRGIT. To be so fully occupied is the greatest happiness I can think of.

TYGESEN. Yes, isn't it? I couldn't live without it—no! Oh, they talk of youth as man's happiest time. I'll be hanged if I'd care to have it back again—with its sensuous intoxication, and folly, and vanity, and all sorts of nonsense—not for a trip to China would I go back to it. Although I must say that I should like very much to make a trip to China.

BIRGIT. But I imagine there are plenty of women who would like to have their youth back.

TYGESEN. O—oh! Well!—There we are!—Yes, youth is woman's paradise. A romance that she lives. Ball memories, moonlight, yellow note-paper. Ho-ho!—Now you have condemned yourself. Go into the corner now and be ashamed of yourself.

KAREN. But, dear!

TYGESEN. I am coming, I am coming!—I hope you'll pardon me, dear lady! I shall be delighted to have a look at the "Horseshoe" from the inside. Ever since I was a child, that's where I have placed all my adventures. I'll speak for the right to spend a night alone in the big hall in order to watch the ghost walk.

BIRGIT. That might put an end to it! Well, you're welcome! [*As* TYGESEN *goes out*, BIRGIT *runs over to* KAREN]

With a man like that I should never feel bored! I think he's a dear!

TYGESEN. [*Coming in again*] Odessa, you know—To reach Odessa by the road from the interior, as we did—to sit on the train with nothing but that immense waste all around—for the top of that plateau is nothing but a desert! And then to see one mirage after another in the distance—the sea with ships and steamers, whole cities, turrets, domes, mountains. And it's nothing at all—just a mirage! Can you imagine anything more like— Yes, I'll go now, I'll go now!

[*He goes out.*

BIRGIT. Isn't he too funny for anything?

KAREN. I have made them take out some rugs that we brought home from Asia—you must have a look at them. They're up-stairs. We have turned the corridor up there—and the stairway also—into a regular museum. Won't you go up for a moment? I'll come up right away.

BIRGIT. Yes, I will.

KAREN. You'll find Malla there, and she'll tell you all about the rugs.

BIRGIT. Malla?—Miss Rambek, who was like a foster-mother to you?

KAREN. She has been with us all the time.

BIRGIT. Really?

TYGESEN. [*Speaking from the study*] Karen!

KAREN. Just a moment—I'll be right back! [*She goes out.*

BIRGIT *remains standing on the same spot, looking after* KAREN. *Then she walks pensively up to the portrait. A bell is heard ringing in the hall. After a while it rings again. Then it begins to ring incessantly.*

MALLA. [*Comes running in*] Yes, yes, yes!

TYGESEN. [*In his study*] But, Malla!

MALLA. [*At the door to the study*] What is it?

KAREN. [*Also in the study, speaking in a lowered voice*] The stomach protector!

TYGESEN. [*Yelling at the top of his voice*] The stomach protector!

MALLA *utters a cry as she rushes out of the room. At that moment the bell starts ringing again.*

MALLA. [*Comes back, sewing a ribbon in the stomach protector*] Yes!—Yes, here I am! Here I am!

The door is opened slightly by somebody in the room beyond.

TYGESEN. [*In the study*] Goodness gracious, Malla, I have never seen the like of it!

KAREN. [*In the study*] Oh, Malla!

MALLA. [*Handing the stomach protector through the opening in the door without looking in*] Mercy, it made me quite sick!

BIRGIT. Ha, ha, ha!

MALLA. Well, are *you* here?

BIRGIT. [*Coming forward from behind the portrait*] So you had forgotten the stomach protector? Ha, ha, ha!

MALLA. Yes, you may laugh! But I am shaking in every limb— Well, it's about time I said "how d'you do" to you!

BIRGIT. I suppose you still remember me? You used to be so nice to me in those days. Yes, those were pleasant days.—But what in the world—I don't know whether I dare ask——?

MALLA. What?

BIRGIT. A little while ago the landscape was all smiles—and then all at once——

MALLA. Ssh!

KAREN. [*Entering*] Oh, are you here? I thought you were up-stairs looking at the rugs.

BIRGIT. I stopped to look at your portrait. The longer I look at it, the better it seems.

KAREN. That's what everybody says.

MALLA *goes out.*

BIRGIT. Would you care to give me a very great pleasure, Karen?

KAREN. What is it?

BIRGIT. While the paint is drying in the "Horseshoe," I should like to travel a little and have a look at the country.—You couldn't come with me, could you?

KAREN. I?

BIRGIT. As my guest, of course. Oh, we might have a lot of fun together. Just as in the old days, you know.

KAREN. You may be sure I should like to. I couldn't think of a pleasanter invitation—but I can't get away from here.

BIRGIT. The house, you mean?

KAREN. No—but my husband needs such a lot of looking after. Ever since that serious illness——

BIRGIT. Oh, has he been ill?

KAREN. Dreadfully. And ever since that time he cannot be careful enough.

BIRGIT. But there is nothing about him to suggest weakness. At least, he seems capable of talking ten ordinary people off their feet.

KAREN. Ha, ha, ha! Think of it! If we two could be together once more for a couple of weeks! And travelling besides!

BIRGIT. Well, why shouldn't we?

KAREN. He would never permit me.

BIRGIT. Permit? Have you got to ask permission?

KAREN. Haven't you?

BIRGIT. No! Otherwise my husband would also have to

ask my permission. But, of course, we show proper consideration for each other——

KAREN. All right—this is the consideration I owe my husband.

BIRGIT. When he has Malla? Just for a fortnight—or three weeks?

KAREN. Malla hasn't been strong lately. And her memory is failing.

BIRGIT. Yes, I notice she is taking snuff for it.

KAREN. Oh, you *have* noticed? That's supposed to be a great secret.

MALLA *enters at that moment.* BIRGIT *and* KAREN *look at her and laugh.*

MALLA. Why are you grinning at me?

KAREN. Oh, Malla, she saw at once!

MALLA. Lord, what?

KAREN. That you are taking snuff.

MALLA. [*Screaming and covering her face*] Yes, isn't it awful! But tell me, Mrs. Romer, how could you see it?

BIRGIT. I'll tell you, if you will call me Birgit as you used to.

MALLA. Indeed, I will! [*Holding out her hand to* BIRGIT] But I can't understand——?

BIRGIT. All who take snuff secretly develop a peculiar habit.

MALLA. Well——!

BIRGIT. When any stranger comes near them, they do like this without knowing it.

She rubs the back of her right hand against her breast.

MALLA. [*With another little scream*] And that's what I do! Of course, I might have spilled some on my dress! Oh, it's a nasty habit to take snuff. But I thank my Lord it isn't morphine. And it's that wretch in there who's to blame for it.

KAREN. But, Malla!

MALLA. Oh, if we are to see anything of each other, it's no use trying to hide it. If she can see one thing, she can see others as well.—And he's killing me, I tell you! I am so nervous that I begin to shake as soon as I hear him. And I have lost my memory, too. And the only reason is that I never have any peace. I am too old for this kind of thing, and I just can't stand it. If it were not for Karen, I should have left here long ago. [*She sits down and begins to cry*] I don't have to stay here!

KAREN. But, Malla, dear!

[*She throws herself on her knees beside her.*

MALLA. I have enough to live on.—But I can't bear the thought that Karen should be left alone with him. Then he would ruin her, too.

KAREN *is deeply stirred.*

BIRGIT. I see!—And all this is the result of that serious illness?

MALLA. I wouldn't say that exactly. But it was a question of life and death at the time—and, of course, his life has more than ordinary value. For months afterward he was so helpless that we had to watch him every minute.

BIRGIT. And so it became a habit?

KAREN. Of course, we have ourselves to blame for it. We should never have let it go so far.

BIRGIT. Listen to me, dear friends! Now *both of you* will have to come with me on a three weeks' trip. That's all there is to it!

MALLA. We?

BIRGIT. I was talking to Karen about it a while ago. Then I was thinking chiefly of myself. Now I want it for your sake.

KAREN. [*Almost in a whisper*] And how about my husband?

BIRGIT. [*In the same tone*] For his sake, too! Of course! First of all, for his sake! How can you expect him to discover what you are to him, when you never leave him for a moment?

MALLA. [*In the same way*] How many times have I told you so, Karen?—Oh, hundreds of times, thousands of times!

BIRGIT. And if he doesn't discover it during those three weeks while we are travelling, you had better come and stay with me after we get back. All you have to do is to wait.

KAREN. My husband mustn't be left alone. He could never stand the trouble it would give him.

BIRGIT. Let him find out that he can't!

KAREN. What good will that do?

BIRGIT. What a question! It will make him come to terms, of course?

KAREN. He? Never! He would rather die.

MALLA. Lately he seems to have quite lost all sense. The Lord only knows what's the matter with him.

BIRGIT. This is the time to leave him, then—just now!

KAREN. It would be heartless! No, it won't do! Poor thing, he wouldn't know what to do without us.

MALLA. I can just see him raging and roaring here all by himself. And no help to be had anywhere else!—It tickles me to think of it!

KAREN. But, Malla!—Neither one of you understands him. It's his nervousness. That starts his imagination going, and then he's not himself. But it's all over in a moment. And at bottom he's a kind-hearted soul.

MALLA. Who bites! A kind-hearted soul who bites! Whether it's his imagination or himself that bites—it hurts just as much. And then he's so ungrateful. We are doing everything we can for him. And the moment the least little thing goes amiss, he tells us to go straight to hell. We are in the way then!

BIRGIT. Well, why don't you go?

KAREN. It isn't lack of gratitude. At other times he shows himself extremely grateful. No, it's just impatience. We must try to bear with him. Why, we have some responsibility, too.

MALLA. Responsibility? Yes, indeed! We are responsible—responsible for his losing his senses. We have to do all kinds of things for him, but at the same time he wants us to be out of the way. Isn't that madness? If we could eat and sleep for him, he would make us do that too, but we should have to be invisible while we did it!—Yes, you laugh. Do you know that he kept us on tenterhooks for months in order to get Helga, his only child, out of the house? He left us no peace. And do you know what was back of it?

BIRGIT. What?

MALLA. He wanted her room for his maps. That was all.

BIRGIT. For his maps?

MALLA. For his maps. He has maps in droves, and all of them mounted, so there's no longer room enough for them in his study. He has taken the sitting-room away from us, too—that beautiful room looking out on the garden. All that's left to us is this room and the bedrooms up-stairs. But the geography has begun to creep in here, too. Just look!—In a little while he'll have us all cooped up in the bedrooms.

KAREN. Yes, that's what he wants.

MALLA. That's exactly what he wants. But on that point at least Karen has been firm.

BIRGIT. Let him have the whole house. Move out! Come with me!

MALLA. Think of being free, Karen—of breathing freely! And to travel—we who have been travelling so many years! What do you say, Karen?

KAREN. Yes, if he allows it—but he never will.

BIRGIT. You are wrong in this—absolutely wrong.

KAREN. Perhaps.

MALLA. That's the way she is.

BIRGIT. I'll speak to him in your place——

KAREN. He wouldn't even understand. He himself lives only for his work.

MALLA. But why don't you try? Then he'll have to give reasons at least for not being able to spare us. And he doesn't like to admit it!

KAREN. But not now—not just now——

MALLA. Why not?

BIRGIT. Isn't the portrait finished?

KAREN. Yes—but— No, not just now.

BIRGIT. I'll drop in a little later then.

KAREN. Or I'll come for you. Where are you stopping?

BIRGIT. At the Grand Hotel. When can I expect you?

KAREN. Will you be at home this afternoon?

MALLA. Why not this morning?

KAREN. I expect—well, I may as well tell you—I expect Henning at any moment.

MALLA. To-day?

BIRGIT. Isn't he through with it? The canvas has already been varnished?

KAREN. He has been waiting for the varnish to dry. Then he can paint on it again. And there's something he wants to change.

BIRGIT. Then you'll come this afternoon?

KAREN. I will. And thank you very much!

[*She kisses* BIRGIT *warmly.*

MALLA. And thank you for wanting to have an old thing like me along.

BIRGIT. But you must come along!

KAREN. Malla is so fond of travelling.

MALLA. Yes, I am.—What are you looking for?

BIRGIT. My coat. Oh, there it is.—I thought you were still abroad, and here I am, right in the midst of you!—No, thank you, I am not going to put it on. It has turned quite warm again.

KAREN. Why don't you leave it here till this afternoon? Or I can have it sent over for you.

BIRGIT. Yes, if you would do that, please! [*She puts down the coat again*] Good-by for a little while!

KAREN *and* MALLA *accompany* BIRGIT *out. Returning,* KAREN *goes up to the mirror and stands looking in it.*

MALLA. [*Coming in again*] I have my hands full, but I must say this much: we haven't had a visit like that since we moved in here.

KAREN. Yes, I agree with you there—at least.

MALLA. [*Coming closer*] And we'll have to agree on other things, too!

KAREN. Malla, Malla!

MALLA. Yes, something must be done! [*The door-bell is heard ringing*] It cannot go on like this!

[*She goes toward the door.*

KAREN. There he is now!

MALLA. What "he"?

KAREN. Henning. Don't you know his ring?

MALLA *goes out.*

HENNING. [*Entering*] Good morning, my lady!

KAREN. Good morning! I am sorry I couldn't sit for you yesterday.

HENNING. It didn't matter. I had other things to do.—Who was that pretty woman I met at the door?

KAREN. Yes, isn't she?

HENNING. Such an intellectual prettiness. And such style —she doesn't belong here, I'm sure.

KAREN. No, she has come all the way from Odessa, and there, of course, everything is French, or else English. She is married to that wealthy fellow, Romer, the grain dealer.

HENNING. Oh, that flabby old chap!—I saw him at Trieste once. They were living there. People said he had a young wife. They said also she was spending his money pretty freely.

KAREN. She had to amuse herself in some way, didn't she?

HENNING. [*With a bow*] That's extremely pleasant to hear.

KAREN. I knew you would find it so. That's why I said it.

HENNING. And I am duly grateful. People must have some amusement, Mrs. Tygesen. Everybody has a right to it.

He arranges the easel, opens his paint-box, selects some brushes, takes up his palette, and begins to squeeze out colours on it.

KAREN *assumes her pose, leaning against the table with her sewing things on it.*

KAREN. Yes, I heard you were amusing yourself last night.

HENNING. I?

KAREN. You were at the theatre with two young girls.

HENNING. Oh——!

KAREN. Would it be impertinent to ask who they were?

HENNING. Yes, it would. I am very discreet in such matters, Mrs. Tygesen.

KAREN. In such matters——?

HENNING. The most innocent matters in the world. Two little girls who wanted a little amusement.—But perhaps that is not permissible?

KAREN. How did they dare go to the theatre?

HENNING. They don't live here. Nobody knows them. And that's all I know about them.

KAREN. But you know their names?

HENNING. Yes, their names, and that they are stopping at one of the hotels—probably with relatives.

KAREN. Probably?

HENNING. I have never got further than the hotel door.

KAREN. But you have tried?

HENNING. Oh, out of politeness merely.

KAREN. How did you happen to meet them at the theatre? By appointment?

HENNING. You seem very much interested in all this—Who has been gossiping?

KAREN. The lady who left a moment ago.

HENNING. Oh!—That's right—she was in the corner box and kept her glasses on us all the time.

KAREN. You must have been very much occupied with those girls not to notice more the lady in the corner box—you, a portrait painter! You didn't even recognise her.

HENNING. No, I didn't recognise her. Well, if I did have a little fun last night, is there anything wrong in that?

KAREN. Have you never thought of marrying, Mr. Henning?

HENNING. Do you think *that* would be more amusing?

KAREN. Well, if not more amusing—at least——

HENNING. At least——?

KAREN. After all, we don't live merely for the sake of amusement.

HENNING. I do a little work besides, Mrs. Tygesen.

KAREN. Yes, nobody could reach your position without having worked.

HENNING. And work is amusing. But why shouldn't we have a little amusement on the side, too? Just a little—hm?

KAREN. Pardon me, but I can't help smiling. And yet—what you call amusement——

HENNING. Speak out!—Beg your pardon—the head a little higher—that's right! Just a little more to the side—that's it—thank you!—What was it you were going to say, Mrs. Tygesen?

KAREN. I don't remember.

HENNING. It was something about—what I call amusement——?

KAREN. Yes—perhaps others have to pay for it.

HENNING. Why so? They amuse themselves, too.

KAREN. Yes, but——

HENNING. But? You never finish.

KAREN. But suppose *they* should take it more seriously?

HENNING. And "get stuck" in it, you mean?

KAREN. If their feelings should be genuine, I don't think it's nice to speak of it as "getting stuck in it."

HENNING. The trouble is, Mrs. Tygesen, that these so-called genuine feelings——

KAREN. So-called?—Are there, then, no genuine feelings?

HENNING. Oh, heavens, I don't deny that at all! On the contrary, it's the very thing I am looking for. In fact, I am looking for nothing else.—Although, perhaps, that's putting it a little too strong.

KAREN. Yes, I think so, too.

HENNING. You are not keeping still now.—At bottom, however, I was right in what I said. As long as the feeling remains genuine, it is amusing. When it ceases to be so, I quit. And that's where marriage begins. That's actually where it begins.

KAREN. You are against marriage?

HENNING. Not more than one marriage in a hundred is real.

KAREN. By "real" you mean based on love?

HENNING. What else could I mean?

KAREN. But marriage means something more than being in love. That's only what it begins with.

HENNING. And what is it that follows, if I may ask?

TYGESEN. [*Entering*] Have *you* been cleaning in my room to-day? [*He goes to one of the long tables in the rear*] Who the devil has been touching my papers? [*Catching sight of* HENNING *behind the portrait*] Oh, are you there? How d'you do? So it was you who rang the bell, then?

HENNING. Yes.

TYGESEN. [*Still looking for something at the table*] I thought you had finished it?

HENNING. When the varnish is on, you always discover something that has to be straightened out.

TYGESEN. Where can that note be? I fear I must have been careless enough to leave it lying on my desk last night. And then, of course, it's gone.

KAREN. I haven't touched your desk.

TYGESEN. But you should see that nobody else does, either.

KAREN. I don't think anybody has.

TYGESEN. Of course not! Nobody ever touches it.

KAREN. Goodness gracious, dear, how can you wear that old dressing-gown?

TYGESEN. This one? Why, this is the finest piece of clothing I possess! It's the emblem of my dignity!

HENNING. If you won't think it impertinent—what kind of dignity is that the emblem of?

TYGESEN. I'll tell you. It means that I am Master of My Own Clothes.

HENNING. That's quite a new kind of dignity.

TYGESEN. Brand-new!—I used to find it impossible to keep my clothes. And that's what happens to most married men. The moment I had grown really fond of something, it would disappear. And there would be no appeal. The women, I

tell you, develop a lust for power as the years pass on—an obstinate tendency to intrude on matters not concerning them—which must be checked. Otherwise we can't even keep our own clothes.

HENNING. Yes, women are always looking for something new.

TYGESEN. Always something new. And I have fought like a lion for this dressing-gown. Twice I have fished it out of the rag basket. Twice! And the last time—only a couple of days ago—they had actually begun to cut it to pieces—confound them! Look here! I have fixed the cut—that is, as well as I could. Now I am wearing it just to show that, after all, I am the sovereign ruler of my own wardrobe. To rule over my own papers, that's more than I can manage. Yes, my dear fellow, you smile! But just wait!

KAREN. I don't think Mr. Henning will find out. He's not going to marry.

TYGESEN. Oh, you are not going to marry?

HENNING. No.

TYGESEN. Congratulations!

HENNING. Thanks!

TYGESEN. And they come from a full heart at that! A man who has something to live for should never marry. What was it Goethe said?

HENNING. Can't remember.

TYGESEN. Well, I can't either. But he was speaking from experience.—It was something about marriage being a serious drag.

KAREN. George Eliot didn't say that. Although she was also a great poet. And George Henry Lewes didn't say so either.

HENNING. I have known women who proved a help to their husbands—as well as the opposite.

TYGESEN. In painting?

HENNING. Exactly.

TYGESEN. Well, there are exceptions. And let's give the exceptions a chance. That's what I always say. I have no objection to the emancipation of woman. Let her become a minister, if she has the ability—and let him take care of the children! If she's good enough for the pulpit, and he isn't, what's the use of making an obstacle of the clothes. Let's have what's natural in everything. Down with all dogmas!—But after all I don't call that sort of thing marriage. The relation between George Eliot and Lewes was one of comradeship.

KAREN. That's what I thought marriage should always end in.

TYGESEN. But suppose it won't. Suppose the only interest a couple has in common is love, and, when they try something else, it won't go. What then?

HENNING. Yes, what then? There you are!

TYGESEN. And even if it does go, and their marriage turns to comradeship—how can you be sure *that* will last for life. And if it doesn't last, what then?

HENNING. Yes, what then?

TYGESEN. Besides—why can't we get that comradeship in some more economical way than through marriage? At the time when marriage became an institution, nothing was known about the division of labor.

HENNING. Ha, ha!

KAREN. How you talk!

TYGESEN. Some poet who was married said once that he carried his home on his back like a snail. And the fool meant it as a praise of marriage!—When I meet one of my colleagues on the street—one of the married ones, I mean—I always raise my hat twice: once, openly and respectfully, for

the man himself; and once, secretly and in pity, for his hump! —No, I must look in my study again. [*He goes out.*

KAREN *leaves the table where she has been standing.*

HENNING. Won't you pose a little longer, Mrs. Tygesen? [*She doesn't answer*] What is it?—I hope you don't pay any attention to these little notions of your husband's. He is very fond of picturesque exaggerations, as you know.

KAREN. I know. And he often has spells like this, especially when he is overworked—I know. But nevertheless——!

HENNING. But why weep in silence—when one knows as well as you do how to retort?

KAREN. I can't any longer. There is something in me that revolts against it! And lately he has— No, I won't say anything! And I won't cry either.—Forgive me! I am ashamed of myself.

After a little while she resumes her previous position at the table.

HENNING. You may weep with the right eye, if you want to. But I am at work on the left one.

KAREN. Ha, ha!—I don't know what you'll think of me who can laugh and cry all at once. But that's the way I have felt lately.

She bursts into tears again and goes away from the table.

HENNING. But, Mrs. Tygesen——!

KAREN. Yes, I act as if I were not well—and yet I am.

HENNING. Try to think of something else! Just for a moment!—Then the rest will be easy. We'll think out something that's "amusing." You know we can do that.

KAREN. Oh, soon there is nothing left that's amusing.

HENNING. How about the summer?—Summer will soon be here.

KAREN. Yes, for those that can enjoy it. But we cannot. We haven't even the sitting-room left.

[*She begins to cry again.*

HENNING. But you are almost as nervous as your husband, Mrs. Tygesen.

KAREN. Yes, I am. I can't help it. And it's silly.—But I *will* try now!

HENNING. Yesterday I stood looking at the hills around here, and all at once I was seized with a mad desire to travel. Just for a fortnight, I said to myself. And I made up my mind that moment.

KAREN. The lady you met coming in has made up her mind about the same thing.

HENNING. Has she?

KAREN. And now she is looking for company.

HENNING. And you think she and I might go together?

KAREN. No! Ha, ha! You two can't go alone.

HENNING. Why don't *you* be the third one? Can't you?

KAREN. No, not even the three of us could travel alone. You know that very well. To tell the truth, she has invited me to go with her.

HENNING. But that's splendid! You do need a trip. We'll pick out a fourth one. Somebody that's dreadfully serious-minded. Just think of it, to spend two or three weeks taking in some of the prettiest views in the country! Wouldn't *that* be amusing?

KAREN. Yes, it might be.

HENNING. And now, Mrs. Tygesen, I think we'll stop.—Thank you!—[KAREN *moves about*] It might be, you say? Well, it depends on yourself. "To will—that is the trick."—There now! I think I'll consider myself done with it.—Can you make out what I have been doing?

KAREN. No—yes, I think I can——

HENNING. You smile? What were you going to say?

KAREN. What I have said before: that the woman on the canvas looks fresher and younger than the original.

HENNING. And my answer will be to put them side by side before the mirror. [*He turns the easel around*] Come now!

KAREN. [*Approaching*] But *you* must get away from there!

HENNING. I? Won't you let me look? I, who have stood in such close relationship to one of them at least?—Do you see that you look younger and fresher, Mrs. Tygesen?

KAREN. Oh, there goes Birgit now!

HENNING. Birgit who?

KAREN. Mrs. Romer.

HENNING. Oh—! Yes, I see now. Tell me—don't you think I might introduce myself? And propose a travelling route—a common route, you know? Not more than that to begin with—of course! [*He grabs his hat*] I have a good notion to do it! What do you say?

KAREN. Well, why shouldn't you?

HENNING. I'll send somebody to take away all that stuff. Good-by for a while, Mrs. Tygesen! Pardon me, but I've got to hurry! [*He runs out.*

KAREN. I must watch that meeting! [*She goes to the window and becomes aware of* BIRGIT'S *coat*] Oh, I've forgotten her coat. I'd better send it over while I think of it. [*She picks up the coat and looks out of the window*] No, he hasn't caught her. I'll have to run up-stairs to see.

She starts to run toward the door in the rear; the coat sweeps a lot of notes and stones off one of the tables, so that they fly all over the floor; KAREN *utters a cry.*

TYGESEN. [*Appearing in the door to his study*] I thought I heard— But it couldn't be possible—[*He comes a little way into the room*] Well, I'll be—! [*Catches sight of* KAREN, *who is*

frenziedly trying to pick up the notes from the floor] Have you gone clear out of your head?

KAREN. Oh, I just happened——

TYGESEN. Happened?—How could anybody "happen" to do things like that? Is it your intention to drive me out of the house?

KAREN. No, indeed; I'd rather go myself.

TYGESEN. You?—Where could *you* go?

KAREN. You mean I have nowhere to go?

TYGESEN. I mean you should leave my things alone. Why can't you move up-stairs and stay there? You ought to understand that if you can't help me you might at least keep from bothering me. Don't you know I am behind with several issues? I'm on pins and needles! And yet you find out some new way every day to hamper me!—What did you have to do here anyhow?

KAREN. I only——

TYGESEN. Yes, tears, of course!—Oh, leave it alone!—Give it to me! I'll pick it up and put it right. You can't do it anyhow. [*She rises, and he goes down on his knees.*

KAREN. Don't you want me to help you?

TYGESEN. Please get out of here.—Damn the women!—If I could only understand how such a thing could happen!—Could it possibly be—? [*Rising*] Karen!

KAREN. [*Who in the meantime has gone reluctantly toward the door*] Yes. [*She returns to him.*

TYGESEN. How did this happen?

KAREN. I was in a hurry, and I had the coat on my arm——

TYGESEN. Why should you be in a hurry?

KAREN. Because— Well, what does that matter?

TYGESEN. You were hurrying to get another look at Henning?

KAREN. Now——!

TYGESEN. Why did he have to come here to-day again?

KAREN. Just to hear how brutal you can be!

TYGESEN *glowers at her.*

KAREN. You have acted like that every time he was here.

TYGESEN. And you have gone stark mad since he came into the house.

KAREN. No, that's too much! I am not going to stand it!

TYGESEN. What?—This is something entirely new!

KAREN. Yes, unfortunately, it is! For until now I have borne with everything. You don't make the least attempt to control yourself. You insult Malla and me constantly. And you do it in the presence of strangers. But you have done it once too often.

TYGESEN. Oh, go to the devil!

KAREN. What's that?—All right, I'll go!

TYGESEN. You go? Away from here?

KAREN. Yes.

TYGESEN. Do you mean to frighten me?—Oh, go, by all means!

KAREN. Are you in earnest?

TYGESEN. Am I in earnest? No, I'm not. But I don't want to be treated too high-handedly.

KAREN. Yes, now you have had your fling! And now it's to be all right again. But this time it *won't* be all right again. It is going to be serious! [*She goes out.*

TYGESEN. What in the world does she mean? Is she going? Karen! Where?—Karen!—What's all this? Ever since that damned painter—! But I can't imagine— And yet she seemed to mean it. I have never seen her like that.—And she looked as pretty as—[*Calling up through the hall*] Karen!—Karen!

KAREN. [*Up-stairs*] What do you want?

TYGESEN. What are you doing up there, Karen?

KAREN. I'm packing my trunks.

TYGESEN. What do you mean by all this? You'd better explain.

KAREN. All right, I will.

TYGESEN. I wonder if Karen can have some place to go to? But I can't let her bluff me like that! [KAREN *comes in*] What is all this? Where are you going? Do you take me for a child whom you can scare?

KAREN. I'll tell you just how it is. Birgit Romer is going to take a trip through the country around here—and she has asked me to come with her.

TYGESEN. Birgit Romer? Who was standing here looking so sweet—! The treacherous thing! But you don't mean to say that you——!

KAREN. At first I said no. But after the way you have just behaved—yes, now I am going to do it. And I have hundreds of reasons for doing it.

TYGESEN. You mean to go away from me?

KAREN. For a couple of weeks—yes.

TYGESEN. And I forbid you, my dear!

KAREN. Well, that won't help you much.

TYGESEN. Oh? Do you think there is nothing like law and justice? You think, of course, that I won't dare to call in the police? Oh, yes, I'll dare! I won't mind the scandal! I'll telegraph all 'round the country to stop you!

KAREN. Pooh!

TYGESEN. Are you pooh-ing at the police?

KAREN. Do you think I'm such a fool that you can make me believe the police will prevent me from packing my trunks and going where I please? [*She goes toward the door.*

TYGESEN. Karen!

KAREN *stops.*

TYGESEN. You can't dare to do such a thing! And you won't do it. That's right, isn't it? You won't do it? It would be wrong! And you are only trying me—to see if I care. Do you want me to say so? Yes, I do care! I'll be wretched if you go away. What's going to become of me? I never thought you could have such notions, Karen. It's all wrong, what you are doing now— But, then, you have been drifting away from me lately—you're outside. Yes, that's just the word: you're outside. Outside that invisible circle, that community of righteousness which used to bind us together. The people living within it never misunderstand each other. And *you* put a false construction on everything. You don't hear; you don't see; you're living in another world. Something foreign to us both has lured you away. Something—something—something—you are speaking to me from the *outside.* You—you—you *won't* any longer; you're rebellious; you're defiant. Yes—as you are standing there now—you have no regrets: you're accusing me—you're full of pride! It's more than I can forgive you! —You can go! And forget that I asked you to stay!

[*He rushes into his study.*

KAREN. [*Goes out into the hall and is heard to say outside*] Now he has driven me out. Now I will go.

MALLA. [*Is heard to answer*] What were you saying?

KAREN. [*Farther away*] I am going up-stairs to pack.

MALLA *enters and at the same moment* TYGESEN *returns from his study.*

MALLA. What have you been up to now?

TYGESEN. [*Flying at her*] It's *your* fault! You've been goading her on! And if you don't bring her back to me at once—then you'd better look out!

MALLA. I bring her back to you? Don't you believe it —you tyrant!

TYGESEN. How dare you——?

MALLA. Yes, now I'm going to speak up for once, too. I thought you a man of culture. For, of course, those that write books are supposed to know most about culture. But of all people, they're the worst. They're a lot of nervous overworked creatures who never know how to control themselves. May the Lord protect and preserve everybody from getting married to any one who writes books.

TYGESEN. Amen!—The deuce you say! And to me, who have borne with you beyond all demands of reason!

MALLA. You! Ha, ha, ha!

TYGESEN. Will you get out of here!

MALLA. The Lord knows, I will! But not until I have pestered you a little. I am not afraid of you *now*—although you've nearly killed me.

TYGESEN. There seems to be plenty of life in you now!—She's raving mad!

MALLA. I only wish I could make you suffer for all that you've done to Karen and me—you monster!

TYGESEN. Am I a monster? Well—well, if ever—! Do you know what I am? The nicest husband in this town—as sure as I live!

MALLA. No, you're the worst of the whole lot! You should sign yourself "T. T."—"Tygesen: Tyrant."

TYGESEN. Ha, ha, ha! Nero, Henry the Eighth, Bluebeard, and Jack the Ripper in one! That's me, isn't it?

MALLA. Do you know what you have made of me?

TYGESEN. Nothing *à la* Jack the Ripper——?

MALLA. No, not quite. But look at this!

TYGESEN. Well, I'll be hanged! Taking snuff!

MALLA. And right under your nose, too. For it's your fault.

TYGESEN. Ha, ha, ha, ha! So I've made snuff of you! Ha, ha, ha!

MALLA. And you've come mighty near making a drug fiend of me. But now I'll leave here before I get that far. And I am taking Karen with me.—Then you can have it all to yourself!—Good-by!

TYGESEN. Oh, go to hell!—I mean it literally!

MALLA. I don't doubt it for a moment. Good-by! [*She goes to the door, and stops there*] God protect and preserve everybody from people who write books! [*She goes out.*

TYGESEN. [*Stands still for a moment, then running to the door*] And everybody who writes books from crazy females! [*Comes forward; then he runs back to the door again*] Especially foster-mothers! Of the kind that take snuff!—I'll be hanged if I let them have the last word! [*He goes into his study.*

MALLA. [*Returning, is puzzled for a moment at not finding him*] Oh, I see! [*Runs to the study door*] Especially from people who write geographies! [*She goes out as before.*

TYGESEN. [*Appearing after a while*] I'll be hanged and quartered if I let her have the last word! [*He rushes to the door, where he is met by* ANE] Are you running off, too?—Well, good luck!—Clean house—hurrah! So you've put your heads together to embarrass me? But that's where you'll be fooled!

ANE. Madam told me to ask you what we're going to have for dinner?

TYGESEN. What we're going to—? Am *I* to tell—? Oh—! I see!—Nothing! I'll go out to eat. I'll go to a restaurant. Turman is boasting every day of his meals—For once I also will eat like a man owning his own soul!

ANE. Nothing for dinner, you say? That won't be much —for me.

TYGESEN. No, it won't—that's right. Here's a crown.

Then you can buy yourself some dinner, too. We'll have a holiday, you and I!—So you're going to stay, Ane?

ANE. Well, why shouldn't I?

TYGESEN. Fine! Why shouldn't you? There's another crown! Oh, you'll see, Ane, that we'll get along. Now I want—well, what was it I wanted? I can do just what I please!—I'll go out! I guess it's no use trying to work to-day. But I'll do so much the more to-morrow. No trouble to fear—alone from morning till night—and the whole house to myself! You can go out, too! Just enjoy yourself, Ane! We two are having a holiday. [*He goes out.*

Curtain.

ACT II

The same room as in Act I. Tall frames covered with maps are placed all over the room, but in such a way that it is possible to pass between them and that the stairway remains visible in the background. Piles of folded maps occupy the floor at the left.

TYGESEN. [*In his study*] Are you there?

ANE. [*In front of the door*] Yes.

The door opens a very little and an arm is reached out to take something handed over by ANE.

TYGESEN. The coffee was abominable.

ANE. Well, when it has to be kept from seven till ten——

TYGESEN. Why the deuce didn't you make some fresh?

ANE. I was going to, but you kept ringing and ringing till I didn't know what I was doing.

TYGESEN. [*Still behind the door*] Oh, fudge!

TURMAN. [*Coming forward from behind the maps*] How goes it with him, Ane?

ANE. Oh, I guess he's all right. He's mad enough, at least.

TURMAN. Hasn't he got up yet?

ANE. Yes, he's got that far at last. Of course, he's got to sleep in the morning when he doesn't sleep at night. He's gone daft, I think.

TURMAN. What do you mean by that?

ANE. Well, I'm scared of him. He's sneaking around here in felt slippers, trying all the doors. And all of a sudden he's

right behind me in the kitchen, and me not having heard him come. He upsets me so I drop all I have in my hands. Once he came into my room at two in the morning. He was standing right over me. Since then I have kept my door locked. But I've heard him trying to get in several times. And I can hear him on the stairs, and all night long he's opening the doors one minute and shutting them again the next.

TURMAN. That's the same story you've told me every day, Ane.

ANE. I don't know what I am doing any longer. Sure, and I don't! The way these three days and nights have taken it out of me. All there used to be of it was that he came before he came. First we'd hear him, and then it wasn't him. Then we heard him again, and it was him. But now it's him night and day, and no end to it, either.

TURMAN. And I see he's got up his fences.

ANE. That was yesterday. We had to drag out maps—loads and loads!

TURMAN. And you've begun to put them up?

ANE. Yes, and no ladder! It went broke at once, and so I had to take it to the blacksmith. But he couldn't wait till we got it home again. Not him! Then the frame wasn't steady enough, and so we had to put hooks in the ceiling—and me most breaking my neck doing it!—Oh, tell me, professor, won't the missis be home again soon? Is it going to be like this for long? What d'you hear from her?

TURMAN. No, I won't tell a thing.—Did you ever hear the old tale about "the man who was going to stay home and keep house"?

ANE. Oh, him there is worse'n that! And if there isn't a change pretty quick, I'll go, too.—He's beginning to get dangerous, I tell you!—Once he was going round here with a big knife. It must have been the carving-knife, for I haven't

seen it since. And sometimes he's talking out loud and carrying on as if the place was full of people.

TURMAN. That's what we call imagination, Ane.

ANE. What kind of a disease is that?

TYGESEN. [*In his study*] Are you talking to somebody?

ANE. Professor Turman is here.

TYGESEN. [*Still outside*] I didn't hear him ring. Then the street door must be open again.

ANE. My! Now he got on to *that*, too! [*She hurries out.*

TURMAN. [*At the study door*] Well, how goes it, Tygesen?

TYGESEN. [*Coming out with the dressing-gown in one hand, so that it trails after him on the floor*] She's a dangerous one, that woman. I might be robbed and murdered in my own house. Would you believe it? She knows a lot of tough-looking fellows. And they come here sniffing and spying around.

TURMAN. Do you want me to help you with the dressing-gown?

TYGESEN. The dressing-gown? Oh, is that what I got hold of?—Well, that wasn't what I wanted at all. I am sick and tired of it since there's nobody here to get mad about it. [*He hurls the dressing-gown into the study; then he goes into the study himself, returning a moment later with a coat*] You know —she's so confoundedly careless about fire. There's a glow in the stove as late as one and two in the morning. I assure you! I have seen it myself. She isn't quite right either. Once I saw her with the carving-knife. She was making passes with it. Now I've put it away.

TURMAN. You've given up your morning walks, Tygesen. I do think they did you good.

TYGESEN. I'm arranging my time differently now, seeing I can dispose of it as I please.—But that girl scares me. I can't feel safe in my own house. You see, here I am alone

with her. Why should she let in all those people? Why doesn't she keep the doors locked? Why does she keep the fire going? Do you think she means to rob the house first and set fire to it afterward?

TURMAN. Yes, some morning when I come here, the house will be burnt down, and I'll have to look for you in the ashes. But if I were you, I'd try to make friends with Ane. She's the only one you have.—I just dropped in to tell you that I've something I want to speak to you about. But I'll have to give a lecture first. Will you be at home in an hour or so?

TYGESEN. What is it? Anything unpleasant? I can't stand anything of that kind now.

TURMAN. Are you not feeling well, Tygesen?

TYGESEN. Perfectly splendid! Never better in all my life! —More fit, more— Have you seen my maps?

TURMAN. It's going to look like a sort of castle, I should say.

TYGESEN. That's what it is. My castle! Never to be conquered. The place is mine now.

TURMAN. Yes, if you can keep it, Tygesen——

TYGESEN *stares at him.*

TURMAN. What maps are those?

[*He goes up to them to look.*

TYGESEN. [*Joining him eagerly*] I saw them first at the Geographical Congress in 1875—at Paris, you know. They created a tremendous sensation at that time.

TURMAN. Yes, you've told me about them. [*He reads as if translating*] "Imperial Russian Topographical Bureau."

TYGESEN. They're already out of date now. I have hung them up just to show what progress we have made since then. Wait a moment! [*He picks up a paper-covered volume having the shape of a large-sized atlas*] These are nothing but my own scrawls—all the corrections that have become necessary.

First, corrections made by Nordenskjöld in the North—look here, for instance! [*He searches the volume for the map in question*] Then, corrections by Kropotkin in Eastern Siberia. You know—Kropotkin?

TURMAN. The socialist?—Or nihilist rather, I suppose?

TYGESEN. A great scientist, I tell you! He was exiled to Eastern Siberia, and no sooner was he there than he discovered the country to be quite unlike the descriptions of it, both geologically and topographically. Look here—at these long mountain ranges, Yablonoi Khrebet——

TURMAN. The "Apple-tree Range"——

TYGESEN. And Stanovoi Khrebet—the "backbone."

TURMAN. The "backbone"—exactly!

TYGESEN. He has reduced them to table-lands—look at it! —full of——

TURMAN. Well, I haven't time now. I only looked in to make sure of you later. It's impossible to count on finding you in any longer. You've grown so elusive, Tygesen.

TYGESEN. I have my liberty, you see.—But can't you stay a moment? Can't you take breakfast with me? I am so lonely!—I'll bring up a bottle of old Medoc.—I wanted to tell you something about Polyarco's crossing of the Stanovoi plateau. He had an escort of one hundred and thirty men, and they were lost in desert wastes, where they starved and went through the most dreadful sufferings. Some died, and some were eaten by the survivors. It's a thrilling story.

TURMAN. I don't want to be thrilled now. I am going to lecture.

TYGESEN. To an audience of one?

TURMAN. No—I have two now!

TYGESEN. Then they can keep each other company waiting. Or we might send word to your two Assyrians, calling

off the lecture. What do you say? Ane might march to Nineveh!

TURMAN. No, I think I had better march myself. And I have never yet called off a lecture.—You're such an irregular fellow, Tygesen, and you have learned that from the women folks. Good-by! [*Goes out.*

TYGESEN. [*After him, disappearing among the maps*] Why don't you have breakfast with me when you come back? I'll wait for you. Please! I'll get something nice for you.

TURMAN. [*Is heard to answer*] No, thanks! I don't want to spoil my dinner. You see, I keep regular hours.

TYGESEN. [*Comes into sight again, looking very depressed*] He keeps regular hours! And he doesn't even notice that I'm hungry for company—that I can't work—that I just want to drown myself in talk. He has no perception at all, the brute! His hide must be at least an inch thick, not counting the layer of fat beneath it. "You have learned that from the women folks," he said. The prig! [*The bell rings outside*] There now! I bet it's some more of Ane's friends. What does she want with all those suspicious-looking people? Listen to it—starting on a gossip at once! What the devil has she to talk of?—Hm! That's a woman—I wonder who that can be?—I believe— Really, it must be—[*Calling out*] Helga!

HELGA. [*Still hidden by the maps*] Yes.

TYGESEN. Nothing pleasanter could have happened if I had scoured land and sea in a fairy boat looking for it! [*He pulls her out from behind the maps; she is carrying a bag*] My dearest, darling girl! [*He embraces her, walks her a few steps back and forth, and then embraces her again*] Welcome! You're as welcome as if you had my geography in your bag, finished—as if you made me a present of it, all finished.—There's some weight to this bag, for that matter.

HELGA. Yes, I have books in it.

TYGESEN. Oh, you have?—So you are still working hard? That's fine!—Now we'll put it down here.—But, Helga, you are quite a grown-up lady! And you've grown very pretty, too.—Do you know what we'll do? We'll have breakfast together. And we'll bring up a bottle of old Medoc! Hurrah! Now we'll have some fun! [*He rings.*

HELGA. Where's mother?

TYGESEN. [*Ringing and ringing*] Your mother—? [*Rings again;* ANE *enters*] Bring in breakfast! For Helga too! Something good—something tremendously good! And here's the key— Although I don't know— Do you know where that old Medoc is kept?

ANE. That one you had last night, professor?

TYGESEN. Oh, she noticed that, too!—No, I'll go myself—

He takes a bunch of keys from his pocket and goes to the stairway, where he unlocks the door leading to the cellar.

ANE. [*Following him*] But I can go——

HELGA. [*Following also*] Yes, Ane can go——

TYGESEN. Oh, well—go, then. [ANE *disappears*] We'll stay here.

HELGA. Of course!

TYGESEN. To the right. The rack to the right—the bottom shelf.

ANE. [*In the cellar*] Yes, I know!

TYGESEN. She knows it! She notices everything! She's a sly one!

ANE. [*Coming up with the bottle*] Here you are, sir.

TYGESEN. [*Locking the cellar door again*] I'll open it. [*He opens the bottle*] Now we'll be happy and not think of anything but what's in our glasses.

HELGA. Where's mother, dad?

ANE, *on her way out, stops to listen.*

TYGESEN. [*To* ANE] Why do you stop? [ANE *disappears*] Oh, mother—you ask where mother is? Your mother, dear—she's gone to the country.

HELGA. Mother——?

ANE *pokes out her head from behind the maps.*

TYGESEN. [*To* ANE] Can't you get out of here? [ANE *disappears again*] Do you know, Helga, I'm afraid of that woman? There's something crafty about her.

HELGA. About Ane?—No, dad! She's absolutely straight and reliable——

TYGESEN. Ane? You don't know anything about human nature, my girl.

HELGA. But how about mother? You say she's in the country? And she hasn't been out to see me—hasn't said a word to me about it.

TYGESEN. Oh, merely for a couple of days, you see. Lord! she hasn't got to report to you that she's going to do a little travelling.

HELGA. Is she going to travel?

TYGESEN. Your mother has been travelling for twelve years. So why should you object to her travelling just now? [*He takes a look behind the maps*] Are you still there? [*He comes forward again*] She's a horrible person, I assure you. Can't you see that on her face?

HELGA. If I were you, I should be nice to Ane.

TYGESEN. So that's what you say, too?

HELGA. You say that mother has been travelling for twelve years—but that was with you. Never alone. And she has gone away without sending word to me. Was it as sudden as all that?

TYGESEN. There was a friend of hers who dropped down from the skies and carried her off. But, of course, your

mother will be back in time to visit you next Sunday as usual.

HELGA. Next Sunday?—That's to-day!

TYGESEN. Is it Sunday to-day?—That's Ane's fault. I always change my underwear on Sundays.

HELGA. I can't understand. Where is she gone?

TYGESEN. Didn't you hear? A childhood friend of hers, Birgit Romer, came and carried her off.

HELGA. The one who owns the "Horseshoe"?

TYGESEN. Exactly. And I don't know where they have gone. Nor does it matter. They have their liberty, haven't they? Norway is quite a big country, and travelling in Norway is very interesting. Especially the West Coast is remarkable in its originality. If they should take the road through——

HELGA. Has mother gone as far as the West Coast?

TYGESEN. I didn't say that. I don't know anything about it.—No, of course, they haven't. That's too far. But let us leave all that to them. And let's wish mother a really nice, enjoyable trip. Don't you think we should? [ANE *comes in with the breakfast*] Now we'll eat breakfast. I am awfully hungry. And here's the Medoc! Glasses? Oh, here they are. [*To* HELGA] Take off your hat, girl, and come and sit down!—Push the table further out in the room. I can't sit on the sofa when I'm eating.—That's it!

HELGA. What's the meaning of all these maps, dad?

TYGESEN. The meaning of them— You can go, Ane, if everything's ready.—Their meaning, my child—it's that I am in Asiatic Russia just now, and Asiatic Russia has been presented to us in a horribly confused and contradictory manner. I must have them right before me, quite clearly, all these intricate lines that are changing all the time.—Now you go,

Ane!—Many of them—most of them—are nothing but guesswork. You understand, don't you?

HELGA. Not quite.—But haven't you heard from mother since she left?

TYGESEN. From mother? There you go again! Your mother will write when she — Wait a moment! [*He runs behind the maps, but returns at once*] No, she wasn't there that time.—How can you tell me that I should make up to one like her?—I assure you, Helga, she's outright dangerous. And crafty, I tell you! And then she knows such a lot of peculiar people. I never feel safe, day or night.

HELGA. Of course, you can never know who's in the room with you, when all these big frames are standing around.

TYGESEN. What's that you are saying? I can never know who's in the room with me— You're right. You are most terribly right! I shall have to keep the key to the street door myself. And it must not be possible to open that door from the inside except with a key.

HELGA. But then you'll have to go down and open it yourself every time somebody rings.

TYGESEN. That's it! Now you've said it! That's the big problem! If I could only act as janitor myself.—But nobody knows what kind of people that woman lets in during the day—people that may come out at night. I feel as if I had a lot of ghosts around me.

[*He runs behind the maps again, returning at once.*

HELGA. But is it absolutely necessary to have those maps here, dad? Does mother want them?

TYGESEN. Listen now, Helga! *You* are a sensible girl, and *you* will understand. When I am working, I have to think of a thousand things all at once. And then the point is: to see it, to have it right before me, that very moment. One remembers, and yet one doesn't quite remember. And *that's*

where the danger lies! One must never rely on one's own memory! Do you understand? I am sure you understand! And then it gives such a comfortable sense of elbow-room, being able to walk through the whole house with nothing but my geography in sight. All around me nothing but what I have to be thinking of. On every side this undisturbing sameness.—Come on now, Helga! I am ravenously hungry! [*He moves her bag*] That's heavy. What is there in it?

HELGA. Books.

TYGESEN. Oh, yes!—But why do you bring books with you to the city?

HELGA. We have been exchanging them—I and another girl. That's why we came in.

TYGESEN. Can you get into the libraries to-day?

HELGA. Yes, if they know you——

TYGESEN. Sit down!—That's it!—Now we're going to be really cosey.—As you show no intention of beginning—I'll help myself, if you'll excuse me.

HELGA. Where is Malla?

TYGESEN. With your mother.

HELGA. Malla, too——?

TYGESEN. Heavens, Helga, why don't you start?

HELGA. Thank you, I have just eaten. But I'll have a few drops of wine.

TYGESEN. Yes, the wine is splendid!—One advantage of travelling is that you learn to pick your wine.—Here, then: to your welcome, Helga!

HELGA. Skoal! [1]

[1] *Skål*, pronounced "skoal," is the word used by all Scandinavians in carrying out the solemn rite of imbibation—a rite requiring that nobody raise his glass to his lips without giving everybody else present a chance to do so at the same time. The word means "bowl," but has come also to get the meaning of a "toast." It corresponds to the German "Prosit" or "Gesundheit," the French "A votre santé," and the English-American "Here's to you."

TYGESEN. Mm, but that's wine!—Lately I have had such a craving for wine.—You must eat something, Helga.

HELGA. No, thank you, I can't.

TYGESEN. Well, tell me a story while I am eating.

HELGA. Tell a story—I? That would be still more impossible.

TYGESEN. Something that has impressed you. Something you have heard or read. Something you have come to care for.

HELGA. I don't know of anything.

TYGESEN. I am sure you do!—You needn't be bashful with me. Of course, we have never talked much together, but that's your own fault, Helga. Have a little more wine, and it'll come.

HELGA. Thanks—I can't stand that much, dad!

TYGESEN. Oh, yes, you can! Skoal! And once more, Helga, welcome! [*Both drink*] You seem like a new girl to me.

HELGA. And you, too, dad—that is——

TYGESEN. What do you mean, girl? Don't I look well?

HELGA. Oh, yes!—No, I meant—you're so nice.

TYGESEN. And that's quite a novelty?

HELGA. Oh, not at all—ha, ha! But you never seemed to care for me.

TYGESEN. [*Wistfully, taking her hand*] I have been so busy. And you shouldn't misunderstand it.—Well, haven't you a story to tell me?

HELGA. If you really want it—there is something that has made an impression on me.

TYGESEN. Let's hear! Oh—let's hear it!

HELGA. A little love story.

TYGESEN. Fine! Just the thing for your age! Don't be bashful now! Let's have it!

HELGA. Well—once they had a winter picnic in this city,

and went sleigh-riding. They used to, you know. They drove out to some place and had a fish dinner. But they brought the wine with them from the city. And I suppose they do that still.

TYGESEN. Oh, yes!

HELGA. There must have been something like fifty sleighs, with a lady and a gentleman in each of them.

TYGESEN. That's the way.

HELGA. And then the couple in one of the sleighs——

TYGESEN. Hm, hm!

HELGA. He had on a fur coat and a fur cap, and she also had on a fur coat and a fur cap, and they were talking and laughing all the way. That is, he was talking all the time, and mostly about foreign countries. And when they arrived and went to dinner those two sat down together.

TYGESEN. Of course.

HELGA. And then, while all the rest of the people at the table were talking and shouting—he got more and more enthusiastic as he kept telling her about the old Germans.

TYGESEN. About the old Germans? That's funny! I thought he was going to make love to her.

HELGA. I guess he meant to. But that was his way. He began with the old Germans.

TYGESEN. I never heard the like of it! Why not with Adam and Eve?

HELGA. He told her there used to be two kinds of Germans —eastern and western. The western ones were the Franks, the Saxons, the Frisians, and the Germans in England.

TYGESEN. Quite right! The Franks, the Saxons, the Frisians, and the Germans in England—that's fine, Helga! So you know all that?

HELGA. The eastern Germans were the Scandinavians and the Goths.

TYGESEN. The Scandinavians and the Goths? That's not the usual classification. But it's the right one.—Skoal, Helga! Splendid! [*They drink*] Three cheers for the Scandinavians and the Goths!

HELGA. And a tiger!—They were a restless lot, he said; it was they that made the whole world restless. They were conquerors, and vikings, and emigrants. They were like the rivers in the countries where they lived—which always come down with a roar. And the Scandinavians and Goths poured themselves frothing and foaming into other races just as their rivers pour into the ocean.

TYGESEN. Fine! By heavens, it's just as I should have said it myself.—Perhaps you're not my daughter for nothing.

HELGA. Oh, it was *he* that said it. It isn't mine. And that same restlessness was in him, too, he said. He wanted to get out—he must get away from here. And he said it so that the spirit of it caught her, too, and without thinking of it, she cried: "I want to go with you!"—And afterward she felt ashamed of herself, of course, but then it was too late, for then they had already become engaged. I can see that you have heard of it before, dad?

TYGESEN. Well, bless my soul, child—if you aren't sitting there and telling me the story of my own engagement!—I had clean forgotten all that about the Scandinavians and the Goths.—How did you find out about it?

HELGA. Mother told me.

TYGESEN. Oh, she did?

HELGA. The last Sunday she came out to see me. A week ago to-day, that was. She recalled it so perfectly that in some places she could repeat what you said word by word. And you have forgotten it?—You spoke of Alaric—the one who took Rome, you know. His name means the "all-

ruler," and it's the same as our Alrek. And Theodoric, that's our Thidrek.

TYGESEN. And that—your mother has remembered all that?

HELGA. Can't you hear from what I am telling you, that she has remembered it?—Here's to mother, dad!

TYGESEN. Here's to her!

[*He drinks, then he covers his face with his hands.*

HELGA. But what is it, dad?

TYGESEN. Nothing. The light was hurting my eyes. Now I remember it, too. What a day that was—what a happiness!—I had forgotten how I boasted of the Scandinavians and the Goths. At that time I was young: and my faith, my future, my love—all was in that boast!—And then the ride home—oh, that ride home! That's what I remember best of all. Then she became mine. Oh, I knew she would—I knew it when I tucked the robe around her.—She was so soft and snuggly! And she was smelling of some kind of perfume—I had been drinking it in all the time at the table—it was like new-mown hay—I had never smelled the like of it before. And I took plenty of time getting her tucked up. She was going to be mine during that ride home. Nobody else in the world knew it—but I knew—and she knew!—And good Lord, how beautiful she looked!

HELGA. Mother looks beautiful still.

TYGESEN. Everybody says you don't take after your mother. And yet there is something of her about you, as you sit there looking at me.—Skoal, Helga! Your health! And thank you!

[*They drink again, and he is evidently much moved.*

HELGA. Now I can't stand another drop.

TYGESEN. Neither can I.—But now all those things come pouring in on me! Your presence is making me young

again— One moonlight night we were sitting on deck, your mother and I, as we were crossing the Mediterranean——

HELGA. You were crossing the Mediterranean?

TYGESEN. That was not long afterward. For we were married at once, and then we went abroad. She was only sixteen. A moonlight night on the Mediterranean—we were going to Algeria.

HELGA. Lord!

TYGESEN. All the stars were out. As I look back, it takes hold of my imagination like some old legend. The love of youth is older than *all* the legends, and it has created most of them. We sat there and talked of just such a legend—one of the most beautiful—the legend of Hero and Leander. It lies spread all over Southern Europe, as the stars are spread over the sky on a night like that; and it has the same blue background. The love of youth, the attraction of one human being for another, has never been imaged more magnificently, has never been given a more wonderful setting. Two continents meet in that legend. The lover swims from one to the other, and makes his goal, but only to die in the arms of his beloved the moment he arrives. What a limitless abandon there is in their longing! The tale of Romeo and Juliet in letters made of stars!—That's what we were talking of—we who were still in the first intoxication of our own love, and who were travelling besides—travelling among all that's great and beautiful in the Old World, in the realms of everlasting sunlight. No other moment could ever compare with that one. That was our Midsummer Day. And with the next one— No sooner did I think of it than it grew dark within me and around me. The sea looked like a grave, or like a sorrow—a sorrow that took such a hold of me that it seemed as if I should have to end my life then and there. Then she bent down over me. She took my head between

her two hands, and looked straight into my eyes—and her look was like a cure for all ills. Then she said—oh, she was nothing but a child herself—but she said——

HELGA. What did she say?

TYGESEN. She said——

HELGA. What is it, dad?

TYGESEN. I can't——!

HELGA. Mercy!—[*Rising*] Where is mother?

TYGESEN. I don't know.

HELGA. You don't know? But, dad!

TYGESEN. You misunderstand! As I have told you, she's away, travelling.—You upset me!—She'll tell you everything when she comes back—or she'll write to you. Great Scott! You don't doubt my word, do you? That's the way it is, I assure you!—Sit down again! Why couldn't you let me be? I was dreaming. And you tore my dream to pieces. Too bad! For the past often turns the present into something new.—But why don't you sit down again? Are you afraid of me?

HELGA. [*Seating herself*] No.

TYGESEN. Now it's all gone. In place of youth and sunlight—nothing but disappointment and trouble! Nothing but strife, and hatred, and stupid and unworthy people!—Oh, I know it's foolish. I know that the purpose of life is not pleasure. And youth's way of looking at it is a snare.—But it's of no use! When that unbearable darkness descends on me, then life is a fright and a plague—oh!

HELGA. Tell me more instead! It was so wonderful—oh, so wonderful!—Skoal! [*They drink*] What kind of a legend was that? The one you told about? It was gorgeous!

TYGESEN. Don't you know the story of Hero and Leander?

HELGA. No.

TYGESEN. Are you not studying mythology?—Or Shakespeare, for that matter!—In your leisure time, at least? Young girls are always reading things on the sly. Haven't you even read about it that way? What *do* you read?

HELGA. Oh, we read more—I don't know what to call it—more modern things.

TYGESEN. More modern—novels?

HELGA. Ye-es. Novels, too.

TYGESEN. Too? Do you read anything but novels?

HELGA. Oh, serious things also—things we can learn from.

TYGESEN. As, for instance?

HELGA. For instance—well, geography, for instance.

TYGESEN. You read geography? In your free time?

HELGA. Oh, with illustrations, you know!

TYGESEN. Why, here's the bag! That's right! Let us see what kind of books you borrow?—I suppose it can be opened?

HELGA. But that wouldn't do, dad. It's something of a secret, don't you know?

TYGESEN. Oh, secrets! I thought so! You rascals—you're eating forbidden fruit! I know you.—How the dickens do you open this bag?

HELGA. You mustn't, dad! You mustn't open it! You have no right to do so! I can't believe that *you* will use the right of the stronger against little girls like us—will you? You, who are so highminded?—No, I am holding on to the bag—yes, I am! And just imagine, dad, that there are twenty-four hands doing the same as mine. All of them are holding on to it. Then you can't open it, can you? You would only misunderstand. Yes, I know you would! Did I say "secrets"? That wasn't what I meant. I meant —ha, ha! Really, I think I had too much wine!—No, no, dad, let me have the bag! Two of us girls brought it in. We were going to exchange the books, and it was my turn to carry

the bag. It doesn't make any difference to me, you know—the books are not for me. But there are books among them that I am not to let anybody see. I don't know why, but that's what they said. It's a shame you won't trust me. [*She is on the verge of crying*] Oh, dad, you were so nice a while ago!—You would be the first one to take our side if anybody else tried to do that. Yes, you would—I know you! Suppose the whole senior class was in a room, and had locked the doors, and some man tried to break in! Oh, you would make him ashamed of himself, and drive him away—oh, yes, you would! But now you are doing exactly like that man.

TYGESEN. What eloquence, Helga—and what excitement!

HELGA. No, I am not excited. It isn't mine— Yes, it does bother me that other people's secrets can't be safe with me. [*She begins to weep*] Oh, don't, dad!

TYGESEN. The more you say, the more I feel justified in opening the bag—so it seems to *me*, at least.—Let go now! [*He opens the bag*] Now, let's see! They look as if they had been read a lot. French—hm—hm? "Cruelle Énigme"—by Bourget. Isn't that story a little—I don't know how to put it. Can't you give me a nice word for it? You had such a number of them a moment ago.—Now we had better be friends again, or I'll think that this is your own concern. "Cruelle Énigme"—isn't it a little—well?

HELGA. Realistic, you mean perhaps?

TYGESEN. Yes—realistic. I suppose you are the only one out there who really knows French?

HELGA. Among the girls, yes— But I think that book comes from our French teacher— But you mustn't tell anybody!

TYGESEN. "Cruelle Énigme"—"cruel riddle"—what kind of riddle is that?

HELGA. Oh, I have heard them talk of it. I think it's the riddle of human nature. Of course, I don't know.

TYGESEN. Of human nature? One part that is spiritual, and another that isn't—is that what it means?

HELGA. Something like that.—But it isn't right, what you are doing now, dad!

TYGESEN. Oh, you don't think so?—Here's one named "Equal freedom for women and men." What kind of freedom is that? That's not a novel, I should say.

HELGA. I wonder if it isn't philosophy? It sounds like it.

TYGESEN. Does that also come from the French teacher?

HELGA. No. That is, I don't know whose it is.—No, dad, stop now!

TYGESEN. All good things are three. "Autour du Mariage, par Gyp"? That's a funny name for an author.

HELGA. They tell me she belongs to the nobility—a duchess, I think.

TYGESEN. A duchess? Of course! At the very least! "Autour du Mariage"—"around marriage." What does that mean?

HELGA. I don't understand at all.

TYGESEN. Oh, you don't?—But don't you think that's a queer kind of geography?—With illustrations! Or perhaps that comes further down in the bag? Eh? [HELGA *remains silent*] Did it occur to you, my girl, that you ought to tell nothing but the truth?

HELGA. For Heaven's sake, dad, when it isn't my secret! Those are not my books.

TYGESEN. But how in the world did you come to tell me you were reading geography? With illustrations? Tell me that!

HELGA. We do read geography also.

TYGESEN. Between lessons?—That's a fine kind of geo-

graphical narrative!—Frankly speaking—as you know geography to be your father's subject, it shows impertinence to call that sort of thing geography.

HELGA. No, dad, it shows nothing but lack of imagination.

TYGESEN. [*Smiling*] Don't misunderstand me!—Ha, ha, ha!—If I laugh, it doesn't mean that I forgive you.—Ha, ha, ha!—What I have just discovered hurts me. It hurts me a great deal. For it means that you lie!

HELGA. But, dad—lie?

TYGESEN. I said that you *lie!* Indeed, I did. What else can it be called?

HELGA. What do you mean by lying?

TYGESEN. Trying to deceive one's own father. Think only—one's own father! It indicates practice. Nobody would begin with her own father. Even I understand that much. Although I have never lied.

HELGA. But, dad!

TYGESEN. You think I exaggerate?—Well, suppose instead that I had been deceiving you, my own child. To deceive one's own child—how would that be? One's own child—to deceive one's child——

HELGA. Mercy, dad, where is mother?

TYGESEN. Your mother?

HELGA. Why have mother and Malla left you? What are you hiding from me? What has happened? Dad! *Dad!*

TYGESEN. Yes, I *have* been hiding something.

HELGA. I knew it at once. But it must be worse than I thought. Heavens, dad, what is it?

TYGESEN. No, don't get scared! Something happened that made us quarrel, and so they left me, both your mother and Malla. That's all. But that's enough! I didn't have the courage to tell you when you came, because it made me so happy to see you. I didn't know how to tell you. Probably

your mother feels that way, too, as you haven't heard from her yet. She doesn't know how to tell you.—It has taken all the spirit out of me. I can't get a thing done. I feel like a criminal. Won't you make her come back? I feel as if I could go to the utmost corners of the earth for her.—Turman knows where they are, although he won't tell. Get hold of him! He can't refuse to tell *you!*—Please make her come back! I am sure you can make her do what you want.—And won't you stay here now, Helga?

HELGA. Without mother? Not if you begged me on your knees! Not if you killed me for it, either!

[*She puts on her hat.*

TYGESEN. But, Helga!

HELGA. Well, if you can't get along with mother, then——

[*She begins to cry.*

TYGESEN. What are you saying, girl?

HELGA. Without you and mother—without mother and you—there's no meaning in anything!—Oh, what a dreadful thing!

TYGESEN. Yes, it's a dreadful thing for all of us—for my geography, too!

HELGA. Well, there will be nobody to disturb you now. Good-by! [*She picks up her bag and goes out.*

TYGESEN *remains alone for a little while; he sits down.*

TURMAN. [*Appearing*] How goes it, Tygesen?

TYGESEN. [*Jumping to his feet*] Did you ring? Was the street door open?

TURMAN. Helga and Ane were standing in the doorway talking. And so I went in.

TYGESEN *gives him a look; then he seats himself again.*

TURMAN. The picture I now behold reminds me very much of Marius seated amidst the ruins of Carthage. No, it makes

my thoughts wander back to the old Assyria. You remind me of the goddess Ishtar, Tygesen, when she was languishing—*atta lû mutêma lu assatka.*—Well, I can light my pipe in here now, since you've become a bachelor, can't I?—What a sigh! Poor thing, is it suffering?—Well, I told you, Tygesen, that you couldn't stand this kind of thing. Only strong people like myself can undertake to live alone; not the kind of fellows that have once been under female tutelage. Without women those poor fellows become as miserable as Ishtar was without a man. She went up to the gods, and she went into the nether world—up and down she went! And it didn't help her in the least. You, too, Tygesen, are one moment in the uppermost regions, and the next one in the nethermost—without the least avail.

TYGESEN. I have been giving it a lot of thought these last days—and at night, too. I mean that Ishtar myth.

TURMAN. It means the dog-days, old chap.

TYGESEN. Yes. But it goes deeper than that. All of us want to draw water from the well of life. Of course! But the more we get, the more we want. The highest natures demand most—find it hardest to be satisfied. That's the horrible thing: that those who have advanced farthest grow most impatient, most unhappy! That's the tragedy of the race, Turman—its tragedy.

TURMAN. Do you really feel as bad as all that, Tygesen?

TYGESEN *gives him a look.*

TURMAN. That you have to philosophise, I mean. You should take long walks and cold baths. Then you should smoke. There's company in a pipe, and it doesn't interrupt you.

TYGESEN. The generations coming after us will have still greater demands, which means that they will be still more unhappy. Did you ever think of that?

TURMAN. You mean, they will grow more and more nervous?

TYGESEN. There you said it—nervous! You know some of our foremost thinkers and critics. You have often poked fun at them. They are all brain and nerves. A hundred years from now that kind of people will be ten times more numerous. And so on—and so on!

TURMAN. Ten times more of nervousness——?

TYGESEN. Ten times more irritability! Ten times more temper! Of course!

TURMAN. Yes, then it will be a joy to live!

TYGESEN. At last it will reach the point where no human being can bear the sight of another one. They'll scream if they catch sight of each other half a mile away—scream with pain!

TURMAN. Is that what you sit here and try to cheer yourself up with, Tygesen?

TYGESEN. It all comes from the spiritualisation of the race. The more it advances, the more it will turn to mere spirit. It's horrible!—Or, at least, it will be so unless we can make proportionate technical advances, and thus render people independent of each other. By making it possible, for instance, to draw food directly from the sun. We are being fed by the sun now, for that matter. With the help of soil and grass and grain and cattle and kettles— Why couldn't it be done without such help? With nothing in between? Isn't that imaginable? And wouldn't that spare us all that now is making us so distressingly dependent on each other? Shouldn't we then be able to meet in spirit only? Or *almost* in spirit only?

TURMAN. Yes, *almost!*—But don't get peevish now. You won't get anywhere by trying to lift yourself by your own

boot-straps. Imagination—that's what it is, man. You need help. That's all there is to it!

TYGESEN. Help? I? Nobody can help me. And nobody will.

TURMAN. My, my! But who knows?—Of course, it depends on what kind of help you have in mind.

TYGESEN. Yes, it's easy for *you* to smile!

TURMAN. I fear you didn't know much about what you had until you missed it.

TYGESEN. Let me tell you once for all that I won't stand your sneering. And to-day I am less than ever in the mood for it.—Otherwise I am human. That much I admit. But *you* don't even know what that means.

TURMAN. Is it really so painful to be human, Tygesen?

TYGESEN. Now, Turman, can't you understand, can't you perceive, can't you——

TURMAN. What's the matter with you?

TYGESEN. Oh, Lord, he asks that! Haven't you noticed—haven't your smell and taste and hearing told you long ago that it takes me all my self-control to bear your presence?

TURMAN. No.

TYGESEN. No, of course not!—And hasn't your logic told you something about it—you who are always talking about logic? Couldn't you figure out that this solitude of mine must reveal to me just how the whole thing has happened?

TURMAN. No.

TYGESEN. That it wouldn't have happened except for you? That it's your fault?

TURMAN. My——?

TYGESEN. Yes, yours!—You were all the time plaguing me with tales about those infernal rooms of yours—big rooms full of books and papers that nobody ever touches. You were

always humiliating me by means of your colossal memory, and by saying that "to marry is to lose one's memory."

TURMAN. But it's true!

TYGESEN. There he goes again—damn it!

TURMAN. You've got into an awful habit of swearing, Tygesen.

TYGESEN. That's the only way a man with a little decent imagination can make the language suffice.—But don't you feel now, when I have explained it to you, that you are to blame for the whole thing?

TURMAN. I'll be hanged if I do!

TYGESEN. No, how could one expect a book bound in heavy leather——

TURMAN. Why not say ox-hide at once?

TYGESEN. All right! How could one expect a caseful of hide-bound folios, covered with tobacco dust, to have any feelings?

TURMAN. Perhaps, if you looked inside——

TYGESEN. God forfend!

TURMAN. You might get your good sleep back, Tygesen.

TYGESEN. I might get—[*With a sudden change*] You know something? You have something to tell me?

TURMAN. Maybe.

TYGESEN. Why don't you say so at once? You said you wanted to see me about something. What is it?

TURMAN. I have a proposition to make.

TYGESEN. From whom?

TURMAN. From them. They want peace.

TYGESEN. They want peace? They want to come back again?

TURMAN. That's what I said.

TYGESEN. Why didn't you say so at once? For then the earth is no longer covered by the flood: the sun is stand-

ing over Ararat! Don't you see, Turman? After all, I am no cannibal! Of course, I can shoot off superfluous words—words have such a tendency to go off on their own hook. But life isn't made up of words. It's made up of realities—of established values, lasting relationships, tasks to be met.—Karen sees that. At a pinch, she is not without common sense.

TURMAN. But first of all you had better hear——

TYGESEN. No more "buts"! Let's have a drink on this!

TURMAN. Delighted, but——

TYGESEN. No "buts," I tell you! This wine here does not deserve any "butting." [*They drink*] Isn't that so?

TURMAN. It's good all right, but——

TYGESEN. What? Have you more of them? You want another glass?

TURMAN. Delighted, but——

TYGESEN. Oh, wash down your "buts"! Wash them down! Come on! [*They drink.*

TURMAN. Thanks! The wine *is* good. But——

TYGESEN. More? You're insatiable! Take the bottle!

TURMAN. There isn't much left in it. But——

TYGESEN. Out with them then, man! Or you'll choke on them!

TURMAN. The conditions, I mean—wouldn't you care to hear them?

TYGESEN. Conditions for what?

TURMAN. For their coming home again.

TYGESEN. There are no conditions. I'll take Karen in my arms, and kiss her, and carry her in. Without any conditions whatsoever—that's what I'll do. All that silly stuff we talked—not a word about it! Nor to Malla either! At bottom she is all right, too.

TURMAN. That means: enter women folks, exit geography.

TYGESEN. Exit geography?

TURMAN. They want no more geography in this room. Both maps and notes must go. They want this room to themselves.

TYGESEN. They want it to themselves, you say?

TURMAN. As a sign, you see, that geography is no longer to crowd them out of the house. There is to be equal division. And they want the sitting-room back, too.

TYGESEN. The sitting-room back, too? That's a joke, Turman. And jokes are not in good taste just now, I tell you.

TURMAN. No, and that's why I am talking quite seriously.

TYGESEN. Why do you smile? You are just making fun of me.

TURMAN. Yes, you're so very fond of fun, Tygesen!

TYGESEN. You didn't speak seriously, then?

TURMAN. Yes, I did.

TYGESEN. You mean I should clear out? Give up this room and the sitting-room? Oh, nonsense!—You rascal!

TURMAN. You are to clear this room of everything geographical—and the sitting-room, too. And that's not their only demand.

TYGESEN. What else?

TURMAN. They want Helga's room—and Helga to come home. They want a fair division. They want *all that is theirs.*

TYGESEN. Oh, that's what they want! Well, Turman, then you can't blame me for taking them at their own word. All that is theirs—I have not the slightest objection. For this is mine, *all of it!*

TURMAN. All of it yours?

TYGESEN. Everything you can name in here has been bought with my money. The whole house with all that's in it.

TURMAN. Including the rats?

TYGESEN. In all seriousness I can answer that the rats are also mine. And why did I buy this house? To do my work in it. And what is their business here? To help me do my work. Those are simple, fundamental truths; on them everything else is built. A fair division must be based on them. That means they have no right to demand anything at all. But I won't go that far: let them go up-stairs! If they don't want to help me, they must at least get out of my way. Now you know what's *theirs*.

TURMAN. That isn't much—the attic.

TYGESEN. It won't do to speak of the upper floor of a house like this as an "attic." Three large rooms and a wide, lighted hallway—a regular museum. Isn't that a home in keeping with their social position? And then, leading up to it, an easy stairway laid with carpets and decorated with objects that would be a pride to any ethnographical collection. Are they queens to wish for more than that?

TURMAN. I imagine it can't be so very splendid up there, for they won't accept it.

TYGESEN. Oh, they won't! Why the devil didn't you say so at once? [*Crying out*] Ane!—They think they can tire me out, I suppose!—Ane!

TURMAN. You can't face it, Tygesen. Remember Ishtar, Tygesen—the Assyrian.

TYGESEN. Ane! Where the deuce is that girl?—I should be a traitor to humanity if I didn't stick it out. The issue at stake is a principle loftier than Mount Everest. And I am not exaggerating either—[ANE *appears*] Oh, there you are! Hurry up and get ready, Ane. We're going to put up maps.

ANE. For the land's sake——!

TYGESEN. This very minute!—Don't argue!

ANE *goes out to make herself ready.*

TURMAN. All right, then I'll write them that you have grown principles—loftier than the world's tallest mountain peak.

TYGESEN. Go on and write! Do it on the spot! You can go into my study. Write them that you are sitting in my study. That I asked you to write. Then they'll understand.

TURMAN. And when the next bad spell comes, Tygesen——?

TYGESEN. Write about what you have seen here—about the maps. That'll be answer enough for them.

TURMAN. O holy matrimony!—Well, have a pleasant time, Tygesen! [*He goes into the study.*

TYGESEN. First he starts the whole trouble, and then he goes around enjoying it. [*To* ANE, *who has just come in*] Why don't you stay in one place?

ANE. I?

TYGESEN. [*To himself*] Wonder what she is after?—Suppose I tried to make friends with her? For it's true: there is no one else. [*To* ANE] Ane!

ANE. Yes.

TYGESEN. Let's put back the table.—That's it!—Would you like a glass of wine?

ANE. I?—Lord, what is he up to now?

TYGESEN. Why do you always get behind me?—Here you are!—I haven't any time to spare. Here you are!—That's it! Skoal, Ane!—[*To himself*] Hm, looking at her close, she isn't so bad after all. [*To* ANE] The less help a man can get along with, Ane, the better. And the farther he'll get. Now, I've made up my mind to have only you. Do you understand?

ANE. We-ell—ye-es.

TYGESEN. I'll double your wages. I'll treble them. For it isn't a question of saving, you see.—Would you like another glass of wine?

ANE. Lord, no!

TYGESEN. Now I'll *explain* to you why we are putting up these maps.

ANE. Won't you excuse me, please? I'll do anything else——

TYGESEN. Wait a moment, Ane, and you'll hear. Nobody could expect you to understand anything until it had been explained to you. Eh?—No!—Well, then: Russia is a mighty big country. And that's the country I am writing about. Do you know how big Russia is?

ANE. Russia? I guess it's pretty big.

TYGESEN. It's so big that if Norway—all Norway—were as big as this [*he walks in a small circle*], then Russia would be as big as this. [*He describes a very large circle on the floor.*

ANE. Just as it is on the map.

TYGESEN. On the map? Do you know what a map is?

ANE. Sure!

TYGESEN. Oh, that makes a difference. Then I can cut it short.—You see, the hardest thing I know is to remember all there is in such a very la-a-a-arge country.

ANE. Have you got to remember everything?

TYGESEN. Everything. Well—that is—not exactly everything. But about the languages, for instance. You see those strips of paper on the tables over there?

ANE. I'm that scared of them, I hardly dare go near them.

TYGESEN. Don't let's talk of that now. Those strips of paper—those are the languages.

ANE. Are those the languages?

TYGESEN. No, not the languages, but notes about them! You understand what I mean, don't you?—Where were you born?

ANE. On Gallows Hill.

TYGESEN. Which means in Christiania, which means in Norway. All people born in Norway talk the same language.

ANE. Do the people on the West Coast talk like us on Gallows Hill?

TYGESEN. Yes, they do!

ANE. But——

TYGESEN. It *is* as I say. Don't break in! That makes it so much harder for me. What I wanted to say—what I wanted to explain was that people who understand each other talk the same language. You understand the people from the West Coast. But how about French? Do you understand French?

ANE. Yes.

TYGESEN. French?

ANE. We had a couple of Frenchmen here, and one of them always said when he saw me in the door: "Je t'aime! Comme tu es jolie!"

TYGESEN. And what does it mean?

ANE. Shut him—come and be jolly!

TYGESEN. I guess we had better not talk any more about the languages, Ane. We'll get at it in another way.

ANE. But can't you excuse me from putting up maps?

TYGESEN. Don't get impatient now, Ane. Don't you see how patient I am?—If you are to make all sorts of objections, it will be worse to have only one helper than to have the whole lot of them.—Now listen to me! Well, then—I'll now enumerate the different races in only a small part of Russia—in a small part only! Namely: Tunguses, Samoyedes, Yakuts, Kamchadales, Koryaks—[*The door-bell rings;* ANE *starts to leave*] Where are you going?

ANE. The bell is ringing.

TYGESEN. Who's ringing it?

ANE. I don't know.

TYGESEN. Nobody comes to see me. And I don't want any more of those people that come to see you. [*The bell rings again*] Be still! Let them ring! Then they'll get tired and not come back. Now let's go on: Ghilyaks, Voguls, Ostiaks, Manchus. [*The bell rings*] Why the devil does that bell keep ringing! Who's ringing it?

ANE. I don't know.

TYGESEN. Ghilyaks, Voguls. [*The bell rings uninterruptedly*] Ostiaks, Manchus, Yakuts, Koryaks, Tunguses— You are not listening to me! You're a regular hussy! [*The bell stops ringing*] Where are you going?

ANE. I thought——

TYGESEN. So now you've begun to "think," too!—Give me the key to the front door!

ANE. The key to the front door?

TYGESEN. Come here with it!

ANE. But——

TYGESEN. Come here with it, I tell you! [*Taking the key from her*] I'm going to the locksmith myself to have him change the lock so that the door can't be opened without a key! Do you understand?

ANE. But if anybody should come?

TYGESEN. Nobody needs to come here at all, and if they come anyhow, I'll open for them.

ANE. But when I have to go out——?

TYGESEN. Why should you go out? Tell me! And if you must, you can let me know!—Everything is going to be arranged so that I can have peace. Everything must be just right in the house, and I don't want to be disturbed from the outside. Do you understand?

ANE. Can I go now?

TYGESEN. Why do you need to go? No! Now we'll put up maps.

ANE. But the dinner——?

TYGESEN. I'll attend to that.

ANE. You?

TYGESEN. You don't need to do anything at all after this. Or hardly anything at all. But you'll get three times as much wages. Four times as much, for that matter, if I can only feel safe. And have peace. So—now the maps!—No, it's no use, damn it! You *must!* First of all, we'll fix the frames.

ANE. Then I'll have to be climbing again?

TYGESEN. Yes!—I don't want any more objections! It's essential to the peace of a house that there should be only one will. And that it should be obeyed. You can bet anything you please that you won't get out of here alive until it's done. So: now we'll begin!

He goes to the table and takes from a drawer a ball of string and a big carving-knife. ANE *begins to scream.*

TYGESEN. What's the matter with the woman?—Why do you yell like that?—Take hold now—none of your tricks will help you! [*He starts toward the frames.*

ANE, *who has been standing in front of them, runs from him screaming.*

TYGESEN. I think the devil is riding you! Why do you run away?

TURMAN. [*Coming from the study*] My dear fellow, what's the matter?

ANE. [*Taking refuge behind* TURMAN] Help!

Curtain.

ACT III

The same room as in Acts I and II, but cleared of all lumber—no more maps or little stones to be seen. The stage stands empty for a while. Then the front bell rings and a moment later the voices of ANE *and* HELGA *are heard outside.*

ANE. [*Outside*] Oh, dear, are you also in town to-day, miss?

HELGA. [*Outside*] I have run in for a few moments only.

ANE. [*Outside*] Are you alone to-day?

They come into the room.

HELGA. [*Who carries a roll of sheet music*] Yes, I am alone to-day. I just came in to change some music.

[*She goes to the window.*

ANE. To-day again?

HELGA. There are so many of us—and we didn't get the right music last time.—Well, how are you, Ane?

ANE. Thanks, it's just as it was before.

HELGA. Are you still scared?

ANE. Scared?—Indeed! What would *you* say if the whole house was shut and locked for the night, and then somebody began, after twelve, walking around the halls, down in the cellar, up the stairs, into the rooms—heh?

HELGA. Well, it must be somebody else, and not father. For I had a letter from him yesterday, from Bessarabia—from Kishinev—that's a city down there, way down by the Black Sea. So you needn't be afraid of dad, Ane. He can't possibly be around here at night.

[*She keeps looking out of the window.*

ANE. As if I couldn't recognise his steps,—he, who has a double and always is heard coming twice?

HELGA. That's what they say. I have never heard it.

ANE. But I have, many times. First I used to hear him on the stone walk outside, then in the hall, but there was no professor there. Then I would hear him again, and it was the professor. That's why I have always been scared of him. He isn't like other people.

HELGA. No, he isn't— He is thinking of me all the time, he writes, and it won't leave him in peace.

ANE. Maybe that's why I can hear him here at night—he can't get any peace?

HELGA. But then he should be coming to the school—for that's where I am.

ANE. Yes, it would be much better if he went spooking around the school instead.

HELGA. Have you told Mr. Turman about this?

ANE. I have. And do you know what he said? "It's contrarious to science," he said. What we can hear with our own ears? For those that are staying with me can hear it, too.

HELGA. Are you not alone?

ANE. What? Alone! It's all I can do to be here alone in the day. I don't dare go in any of the other rooms. I don't dare go up-stairs or down in the cellar. I stay here and in the kitchen—that's what I do.

HELGA. But who's staying with you at night, Ane?

ANE. Oh, well—that's as it happens—mother and others.

HELGA. What does your mother say?

ANE. Well, she won't stay here any more—not to save her soul. That's the way *she* feels about it.

HELGA. I shouldn't dare to stay with you, either, now. You have frightened me——

ANE. No, I guess it has to be somebody who's got a lot of courage——

HELGA. But, Ane——

ANE. It's for the good of the house, miss.

HELGA. I suppose it's some girl friends of yours?

ANE. Of course! Who else could it be?

HELGA. No, of course!—There was something I wanted to ask you about——

ANE. Well?

HELGA. Oh, well, never mind.

[*She looks out of the window, and then at her watch.*

ANE. Have you been reading something again, miss?

HELGA. Yes, the best thing I ever read in all my life!

ANE. Oh, won't you tell about it?

HELGA. I have been reading about a couple that couldn't have each other because they were too young. That is, they were not too young, you see, but his father thought so.

ANE. That was foolish!

HELGA. But they were not afraid, and so they went away together.

ANE. Without anybody knowing it?

HELGA. Without anybody knowing it. And then they came to a little town, and there they rented a garret in a little house. There was nothing but the garret up there, and they lived in it. Only the two of them.

ANE. Only the two of them.

HELGA. They were together all the time. They cooked their food together. They read together——

ANE. Were they students?

HELGA. Why should they be students?

ANE. No, I guess there wasn't much studying done.

HELGA. They had such an awfully good time. Nobody

knew about them. Nobody came to see them. Only the two of them.

ANE. Didn't they get tired of that?

HELGA. What do you mean?—But soon they got very hard up.

ANE. They hadn't any money?

HELGA. Not very much. But they didn't care in the least! They sold everything they could spare, and their watches first of all. What did they care about the time? And then her jewelry. What did they care about such things? And then all the clothes they didn't use. The name of the story is "Life's Superfluities." They sold what they had no need for, you see. But the winter was dreadfully cold, and soon they had no wood left.

ANE. No wood either?

HELGA. Then they burned the furniture.

ANE. The furniture!

HELGA. They didn't need it, you see—and so they used the table and the chairs and the bed——

ANE. The bed, too!

HELGA. They didn't need it! And when it was all gone, they pulled up the stairway, and cut it to pieces, and burned it.

ANE. The stairway——!

HELGA. They didn't need the stairs. And then came his father.

ANE. Well, I should say it was about time!

HELGA. He was a shrewd one! He had known of everything, for the landlord was his friend and kept him posted. He had just been waiting to see them starve—and give in.

ANE. But they didn't give in?

HELGA. No, you may be sure! It was the old man who had to give in.

ANE. Good for them!

HELGA. But, of course, I can't tell it the way it reads, for it's perfectly wonderfully written. Just think, if it happened like that in real life nowadays! But I guess it doesn't.

ANE. No, I guess not.—Lord, but you're like your father, miss!

HELGA. I? Am I like dad?

ANE. I mean, it's only one thing at a time with both of you. It's nothing but geography with him, and with you it's——

HELGA. Don't you say it, Ane——!

ANE. Whom are you looking for?

HELGA. I? Oh, it's such fun to stand here again and look at all the familiar faces on the street and in the windows. There's the man who brings coal now.

ANE. There's one fellow who keeps passing here all the time—in a grey coat.

HELGA. In a grey coat, you say?

ANE. And now it's this one, and now it's that——

HELGA. Whom do you mean?

ANE. Him that painted your mother, and Miss Malla didn't want to have along on the trip.

HELGA. Mr. Henning?

ANE. Sure.

HELGA. You see him pass—now with this one——

ANE. And now with that one.

HELGA. Girls, you mean?

ANE. Sure.

HELGA. Have you seen him to-day?

ANE. No, not to-day.

HELGA. But you don't mean to say——?

ANE. Sure, I do! He's a fine one, he is!

HELGA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Ane!—And

I'll tell you: when a man is really fond of somebody, then he has to go out walking with others too, or people will find out whom he is fond of.

ANE. Has Mr. Henning been saying that?

HELGA. How should I know? I don't know what Mr. Henning has been saying.

ANE. For that's what they all say——

HELGA. Do they——?

ANE. And the best thing is to pay them back in the same coin. They are like that, and—tit for tat!

HELGA. Haven't you anybody whom you are fond of?

ANE. Fond of—that can mean such a lot of things.

HELGA. Haven't you a beau?

ANE. The idea! No, it's too much like being robbed. We've dropped that kind of thing, we girls.

HELGA. Having beaux——?

ANE. Sure! And we've made a song about it, too.

HELGA. Oh, sing it!

ANE. I'll be glad to. It goes to the tune of "The Last Rose." It has another tune, too, and that's much better, but I don't know it so well.

HELGA. Sing the one you know!

ANE. [*Sings*]

I won't have a lover ever,
For I want to own my soul;
False I'll be to no one never,
But I want to like 'em all.

One to-day and one to-morrow,
That will be my happiness.
So I bid good-by to sorrow,
Leave to each his own distress.

HELGA. [*Looks at her watch the moment the song is finished and runs out*] Good-by for a while!

ANE. But the music, the music!

HELGA. [*Already outside*] Oh, let it stay there!

ANE. [*Hurries to the window*] I don't see anybody. I must run after her.

[She runs out, and for a little while the stage is empty.

BIRGIT. [*Is heard speaking outside*] After you!

TURMAN. [*Also outside*] Oh, no, after you!

BIRGIT. [*Outside*] Is there no maid here?

TURMAN. [*Outside*] Doesn't seem so.

BIRGIT. [*Outside*] Yet the front door wasn't locked——?

TURMAN. [*Still outside*] Tygesen should know of this!

Both come into the room.

BIRGIT. Well, you are——?

TURMAN. Yes, I am. And you are——?

BIRGIT. Yes, I am.

TURMAN. I am very prompt, as you see.

BIRGIT. You'll forgive me for asking you to meet me?

TURMAN. Not at all! I had to come here to get a book for Tygesen anyhow.

BIRGIT. He's in Bessarabia?

TURMAN. In Bessarabia, at Kishinev. Had a letter from him yesterday. I am to look up a book in his library and send it to him.—Have you had a pleasant trip?

BIRGIT. Very pleasant, but all too short. Mrs. Tygesen insisted on going home.

TURMAN. Tygesen will soon be here, too.

BIRGIT. I wanted to have a little talk with you before the rest arrive. They stopped at the school and will be here in a few moments.

TURMAN. I am at your service.

BIRGIT. Mr. Tygesen was in pretty bad condition when he left, wasn't he?

She motions TURMAN *to be seated and also sits down herself.*

TURMAN. His condition was so bad that if I only said "How goes it, Tygesen?" he would shriek.

BIRGIT. You haven't much sympathy for him?

TURMAN. Oh, yes!—Yes, I have sympathy for all who are married.

BIRGIT. Consequently for me, too?

TURMAN. Not while your husband is in Odessa and you here.

BIRGIT. [*To herself*] I'll make you pay for that. [*To* TURMAN] And I, for my part, have sympathy with all who are made selfish by their work.

TURMAN. By their work? Does that make anybody selfish?

BIRGIT. Indeed! In the end they find everything and everybody in the way. Only their work counts.—There are many of that kind.

TURMAN. But not Tygesen?

BIRGIT. Tygesen especially. Does he really need all the maps he's putting up?

TURMAN. Not one of them.

BIRGIT. Not one of them? That's worse than I thought.

TURMAN. He knows them by heart. Including the new ones, as soon as he has had a look at them.

BIRGIT. But why should he fill up the house with them, then?

TURMAN. The idea of it has caught his imagination. And when that's the case, Tygesen is absolutely intractable.

BIRGIT. But who has turned his imagination in such a direction?—Crowding his family out, I mean, and leaving no place for anything but his work?

TURMAN. Do you know Tygesen?

BIRGIT. No, but I have known men of imagination.

TURMAN. Then you ought to know how blind they can be.

BIRGIT. Has it ever occurred to you that the reverse might be true?

TURMAN. The reverse?—How do you mean, madam?

BIRGIT. That men of imagination—in spite of all their slips—might be the only ones who see—the ones among us who discover things?

TURMAN. Oh—I see! [*He moves his chair further away.*

BIRGIT. Yes, you have good cause to be frightened—for there is a little of the same thing in myself.—What I mean is, that most of the trouble in this world comes from those who have not enough imagination. And that's the case here, too.

TURMAN. Is that so?

BIRGIT. If Tygesen hadn't met a certain old friend of his again, nothing would ever have gone wrong. And if that friend hadn't been standing in the way, the whole thing would have been settled by now.

TURMAN. But those are Tygesen's own words! How do you know that I have stood in the way of a settlement?

BIRGIT. By your own letters.

TURMAN. By my own letters?—Then I don't even know what I am writing?

BIRGIT. Of course you don't.

TURMAN. No, of course not! Is it by holding the letters up against the light that you have——?

BIRGIT. No, merely by reading them and by using my vision. Which is more than you can do.

TURMAN. So I'm beginning to think.—I suppose that, just now, I don't see you either?

BIRGIT. You?—See me?—No!

TURMAN. So you're invisible!— Well, even Tygesen hasn't carried it that far.

BIRGIT. Can you see that hand?

TURMAN. That hand—yes. Do *you* think I can't see it?

BIRGIT. Do you really see it?

TURMAN. Really see it? Well—perhaps it's invisible, too?

BIRGIT. Can you see that it is *my* hand?

TURMAN. Could it possibly be anybody else's?

BIRGIT. *How* do you see that it is mine?

TURMAN. Well—because it's connected with your arm. Can't you see that?

BIRGIT. Yes, but there are other ways in which I can see that your hand is *yours*.

TURMAN. So now the turn has come to mine.

[*He holds out his hand.*

BIRGIT. I think that mine will be more than enough. What do you see?

TURMAN. A woman's hand. With five fingers. Rather long. And a ring. Also a palm.—What do you expect me to see?

BIRGIT. Everything.

TURMAN. That means your wrist too?

BIRGIT. If you can.

TURMAN. Is that so very difficult—to see your wrist? There is a bracelet. Well, I don't know anything about trinkets.

BIRGIT. How about what you do know?

TURMAN. About the hand?

BIRGIT. Yes, the hand, for instance.

TURMAN. It has never been in a washtub—it's so very white.

BIRGIT. Is that all?

TURMAN. What do you mean? The veins? The nails? Or perhaps you are thinking of the inside—the lines? Do you want me to tell your fortune?

BIRGIT. If you can.

TURMAN. No, I can't. I don't believe in it, either. But that's not the reason?

BIRGIT. But somebody else, a man with imagination—do you know what he saw?

TURMAN. No, tell me.

BIRGIT. My character. And a good deal of my history, too.

TURMAN. In your hand? [*He bends to look at it.*

BIRGIT. In it and on it. He saw why this hand must be mine—in a word: he *saw* it. And if it came near him—as near as it is to you now—he could feel it, too, without touching it. Could feel how it repelled or attracted him.

TURMAN. The deuce, you say!

BIRGIT. Ha, ha, ha! And you think you see? That you understand women? That you can explain marriage? You dare to interfere in relations so various and so delicate as those between Tygesen and his wife?

[*She has risen in speaking these words.*

TURMAN. [*Who has also risen*] I have never done so!

BIRGIT. Yes, to such an extent that, if you were not as hopelessly blind as you are, it might be called criminal.

TURMAN. Criminal? Have I been guilty of anything criminal?

BIRGIT. Oh, there are more crimes than those mentioned in the law-books. The very worst ones are not there at all.

TURMAN. As, for instance?

BIRGIT. As, for instance, the tainting of a child's imagination.

TURMAN. But have I——?

BIRGIT. It's of no use getting angry, professor! Men of imagination—and particularly men of genius—*are* children. They receive things with wide-open senses and in absolute innocence. You can mould the imagination of Tygesen as if it were wax. For that reason it's a serious responsibility to be the friend of such a man.—And you have daily been filling his mind with the notion that a marriage meant a loss to his sacred science—the destruction of it.

TURMAN. But, as sure as I live, that is so!

BIRGIT. Do you think anybody loses anything by living a complete human life? Or that anything you are occupied with could lose by such a life?

TURMAN. We are scattered by it—and held back by it——

BIRGIT. By the practice of love and the development of character? Oh, no!—To be loved and assisted—could that hold us back?—You have done much wrong to Tygesen, and to Mrs. Tygesen!

TURMAN. Upon my soul, I have done him as much good as I could—that's what I have done! And do you know what *he* has done? He has unloaded on me whatever gave him any concern. Tygesen is a tyrant, I can tell you, and he is a tyrant because he is selfish, and I have borne with it so far. There's the crime I have committed!—Oh, I never heard of such a lot of mare's nests!

BIRGIT. [*Smiling*] You are not losing your temper?—But I'll transfer the battle to another field—where you are quite at home. When Ishtar, the Assyrian——

TURMAN. What's that?

BIRGIT. When Ishtar, the Assyrian, had been deserted and was languishing, she sought her sister in the nether world.

TURMAN. *You* know about that——?

BIRGIT. Just think, the goddess was able to plunge into those regions from the sunny realm of illusions!

TURMAN. True—there's no imagination down there. Ha, ha!

BIRGIT. Yes, I am sure she was received with laughter. It seems to me I can hear it echo through the clammy halls of that dread place.

TURMAN. That's pretty good, that is.

BIRGIT. But when Tygesen becomes dejected, as such people often will, and turns for advice to—well, to a man like you——

TURMAN. So I am to be the nether world?

BIRGIT. Haven't you said yourself that you see everything as it is—without any illusions? That's the mark of the nether world.

TURMAN. Pretty good! You're clever.

BIRGIT. Ishtar nearly lost her reason——

TURMAN. Do you think Tygesen——?

BIRGIT. No, Tygesen is a very strong man.

TURMAN. Yes, that's what I thought.

BIRGIT. But he is not the only one here——

TURMAN. Mrs. Tygesen—— [*He checks himself abruptly.*

BIRGIT. [*Going up to him*] When a woman at the age of Mrs. Tygesen is neglected by her husband, she may begin to languish—and she may do some very strange things. That's what *I* can tell *you*. And now I am talking of things I know. —But you are quite blind.

TURMAN. But Mrs. Tygesen is not troubled with imagination, is she?

BIRGIT. All of us have imagination. Even you. And I hope to heaven that yours may play you a trick some time. With that pious wish I must leave you for a moment. I am to meet Mrs. Tygesen. *Au revoir!* [*She goes out.*

TURMAN. There's a lady for you! And educated at that!—Ishtar—she knows about Ishtar! There isn't one in a thou-

sand—not one in a hundred thousand—who does! That much I have to admit! But to forbid me poking fun at Tygesen? That's quite out of the question. I don't think he would like it, either.

ANE. [*Coming in*] What a chase!—Oh, are *you* here?

TURMAN. The door wasn't locked, and nobody was here.

ANE. No, I guess I forgot all about the door. I had to run after somebody I saw going by.

TURMAN. Quite a tour that must have been. I have been here about a quarter of an hour.

ANE. It was our young lady.

TURMAN. Is *she* in town?

ANE. Yes—to change some music.

TURMAN. Would they send her to do that? And all alone?

ANE. No, she isn't alone.

TURMAN. I was supposed to keep an eye on her. But now her mother is back, of course.

ANE. Has she come back?

TURMAN. They have gone out to the school, both she and Miss Rambek, but they won't find Miss Helga there.

ANE. Oh, they'll find her all right. Well, thank God, they're here!

TURMAN. Is all that ghost business at night keeping up?

ANE. Yes!

TURMAN. Well, to reassure you, let me tell you I got a letter from Mr. Tygesen yesterday—from Bessarabia. We have a law in physics which says that no solid body can occupy two different spots at the same time.

ANE. Well, I'll be darned if he isn't here, too—that was me, Ane, what swore to it!

TURMAN. But why should he be around here only at night, Ane?

ANE. He's got too much to do in the daytime, I suppose.

TURMAN. Well, well. You ought to know about that.—I am going in here now to get a book. The door hasn't been locked, has it?

ANE. I don't know. I never go in there.

TURMAN. No, it's open. [*He goes into the study.*

ANE. Why can't they believe me? Seeing as we're more'n one that hear him every night.—In the day—perhaps he's around here in the day, too!

TYGESEN appears at that moment in the doorway leading to the hall.

ANE catches sight of him and turns stiff with fright.

Seeing that she is frightened, TYGESEN *walks right at her without a word.*

ANE throws herself on the floor.

TYGESEN walks silently around her.

ANE raises her head just enough to watch his movements. As soon as she sees her chance, she gets up on all fours and crawls away from him. Once at a safe distance, she gets up and runs out—all this without uttering a sound.

TYGESEN. She's just as she has always been, that one.—But I must have something to drink. A railroad trip like that makes one thirsty as the deuce. [*He goes to the cellar door under the stairway, takes a bunch of keys from his pocket, and starts to open the door; but the moment he touches the door, it yields to the pressure*] So that's open, too. Of course!

He disappears into the cellar, and for a while the stage is empty.

TURMAN. [*Returns from the study with a book in his hand*] Now I must get it wrapped up and sent off. I think I'll go down to my book-dealer. He knows best how to do it.

[*He looks around*] That girl's crazy! To run away from the house and not lock the door, that's too much. If Tygesen only knew of it!

TYGESEN *comes up from the cellar at that moment.*

TURMAN. [*Who is just turning around to go, catches sight of him and stands perfectly still for a little while; then he takes three or four steps backward, very carefully; and at last he faces around, saying*] Stuff! [*Then he turns toward* TYGESEN *again, takes another look at him, and says*] Nonsense! [*He makes slowly for the background, leaving plenty of room between himself and* TYGESEN] Fibs! [*Finally he gets by and reaches the doorway, where he turns around*] Stuff! Nonsense! Fibs!

[*Then he makes a quick exit.*

TYGESEN. [*Coming forward*] I guess Turman was scared that time!—It isn't "logical" to be in Bessarabia and here at the same time.—But somebody must have been here in my place. In the whole cellar there were only three bottles left, and those broken at that! Thieves! Thieves have got in here! So it's quite natural the doors should stand wide open. What's the need of doors on a house that has been cleaned out—I can't help grudging them that wine—they might have been satisfied with something cheaper. Yes, it's nice to be home, isn't it?—And how about my clothes? If they needed wine, they must have needed clothes, too. Yes, I suppose they needed clothes first and wine afterward. [*He goes into the study but returns quickly*] No, they didn't have to drink naked, those fellows. Everything's gone—except this! [*He spreads out the old dressing-gown before him*] I think they might as well have taken that, too. It wouldn't have left me any worse off.—I ought to be on my way to the school, but now I simply must have a look up-stairs, too. I suppose what they thought was: no use saving what's not one's own! [*He goes toward the door*] I can't see why they left the

house behind. In America they would have put it on a cart and made off with it. [*He disappears up the stairway.*

MALLA. [*Speaking outside*] Dear me, there's that front door standing open! Think if Tygesen had seen that!

[*She comes in with* TURMAN.

TURMAN. I fear it was I who forgot to shut it, Miss Rambek. For I must tell—something happened to me in here—something very peculiar.

MALLA. Well—and Ane isn't here, either?

TURMAN. Perhaps she's in the garden——

MALLA. Or in the cellar. I see the cellar door is also open. But you're not at all like yourself, professor. That's what I said to myself the moment I laid eyes on you.

TURMAN. No, because something very peculiar happened to me.

MALLA. What happened to you?

TURMAN. Of course, it was nothing but a delusion.—Ane has been talking a lot of silly stuff about Tygesen—about his having—having——

MALLA. A double?

TURMAN. The Lord help me! There *she* goes, too!

MALLA. Oh, many a time we have heard him coming, and then he didn't come. But a little later he would come.

TURMAN. That's something I ought to have heard, too, if it were true—considering how often he has come to see me.

MALLA. It isn't everybody that can hear it.

TURMAN. So I understand—but my head has been filled so full of that kind of talk, that— Well, you can hardly believe it, but—it's a fact that I seemed to see Tygesen standing over there——

MALLA. Where?

TURMAN. By the cellar door.

MALLA. Tygesen?

TURMAN. And he was turning his head after me as I went by.

MALLA. When was that?

TURMAN. Just a little while ago.

MALLA. But didn't you say he was in——

TURMAN. I had a letter from him yesterday—from Kishinev. Yet he was standing right there, with his grey hat on.

MALLA. Lord, but that's like him!

TURMAN. What's like him?

MALLA. To scare people with all sorts of tricks.

TURMAN. Has he also scared you?

MALLA. Yes, when he was hundreds of miles away.—What's up now?

TURMAN. [*Having caught sight of the dressing-gown, he walks backward with his eyes on it*] His dressing-gown!

MALLA. What about it?

TURMAN. It—it wasn't there a while ago.

MALLA. His old dressing-gown? You don't mean to say that's having a double, too. I fear it's a little too far gone for that.

TURMAN. But nevertheless it's most remarkable.

MALLA. Are you not feeling well, Mr. Turman?

TURMAN. I don't think I am. I'll take a turn through the garden. Then I can look for Ane at the same time, and ask her to come in.

MALLA. Perhaps I had better go with you?

TURMAN. No, thank you! No, it's merely an attack of the imagination with which the house is full. Perhaps, if I go outside, I'll get rid of it. [*He goes out.*

MALLA. Tygesen can't have dragged that rag with him to Bessarabia! And it could never have got home alone, I'm sure!

She turns around and sees TYGESEN *coming down the stairs toward her. As he moves without a sound and without the least change of expression on his face, while his eyes are firmly fixed on* MALLA, *he gives one the effect of growing taller as he comes nearer.*

MALLA *sets up a shriek when* TYGESEN *is a few steps away from her; keeping as close to the wall as possible, she then rushes wildly out of the house.*

TYGESEN. Well, that's some consolation! To have *her* run away! After that all the rest hardly matters.—For there isn't a thing left here that belonged to me. I won't say a word about the place not being cleaned while I have been away.—Not a thing left up there. Thieves—thieves all over the house. And that confounded girl—too bad nobody would steal her! *She's* still walking around here as if everything were in perfect order. She won't notice anything as long as they don't steal the floor from under her feet. They should have put their heads in through the windows and yelled: "Now we're off with what we have taken!" Unless they did, she could never know, of course!—Nice thing to come home, isn't it? Home—? Where have my thoughts been? Malla has come home again. And then Karen also must— They went away together. If one has come home, the other one must have come, too. Karen must also be here—perhaps she'll come any moment! What does it matter, then, about the wine, and the clothes, and the door, and the girl? I'll just hold on to Karen! I'll be hanged if anybody can take her away from me!—Ssh!—No, it isn't her!—It's Turman! He's coming back. [*He goes into the study.*

TURMAN, MALLA, *and* ANE *enter together.*

MALLA. [*Excitedly*] You say that you saw him by the cellar door, and I saw him on the stairs!

ANE. [*Weeping and pointing*] And I saw him there!

TURMAN. I tell you it's nothing but imagination. One sets the other going. Science does not admit that kind of thing, can't you hear!

ANE. It's a thickhead science must be, then. There he stood, as sure as I live, and s'elp me God, in his grey hat and stared at me.

MALLA. If he is to be around here both when he's away and when he's at home, then it won't be possible for other people to stay in the place.

ANE. That's what I say, too, and I want to go at once.

TURMAN. Hush—what was that?

ANE. Where?

TURMAN *points toward the study.*

ANE. Yes, indeed——!

MALLA. Anything in *there*, too——?

ANE. [*Whispering*] Can you hear?

TURMAN. Maybe——

ANE. Sure, there's somebody!

She takes refuge behind the other two, becomes aware of the dressing-gown, and utters a subdued cry.

MALLA. What *is* it?

ANE. His dressing-gown!

MALLA. Well, what about it?

ANE. It's got out!

TURMAN. Perhaps some thieves——

MALLA. That's worse still! [*She falls behind the other two.*

TURMAN. Not when we know what it is.—Supposing you take a look in there, Ane?

ANE. I?

MALLA. Just open the door—then all of us can see.

ANE. Why don't you do it?

TURMAN. Just give a push. I know it isn't locked.

MALLA. Give it a push, Ane!

ANE. Well, I guess that can't be so very dangerous. [*She tries to push the study door open*] It's locked on the inside!

[*She runs behind the other two.*

TURMAN. Then there must be somebody in there.

[*Tries to get behind the two women.*

BIRGIT *enters at that moment.*

MALLA. There's Birgit! Thank Heaven!

BIRGIT. What's the matter?

MALLA. [*Whispering*] There's somebody in the study!

BIRGIT. In there?

THE OTHER THREE. Yes.

BIRGIT *starts toward the study door to open it.*

THE OTHER THREE. No, no, no!

BIRGIT. But we must open it!—What's lying there?

[*Wants to pick up the dressing-gown.*

THE OTHER THREE. No, no, no!

BIRGIT. But this is like a Maeterlinck play![1] Who's in there?

THE OTHER THREE. [*Whispering*] Thieves!

BIRGIT. Thieves? Why don't you send for the police, then?

TURMAN. I'll do that. [*Starts toward the door, but turns back*] If I may ask—where's Mrs. Tygesen?

BIRGIT. Across the street, with a friend of Helga's.

MALLA. Oh, at the Toresens'!

TURMAN. She's the real master here, and I think she should be told first. [*He hurries out.*

ANE. There he goes now! Leaving us women alone.

BIRGIT. I couldn't speak out while he was around.—There's some trouble about Helga, you know!

MALLA. About Helga! She was in town, they said.

[1] Of course this is one of the things added by Björnson in his rewriting of the play, the original version of which antedated Maeterlinck's earliest work by several years.

BIRGIT. Well, that's exactly what we want to find out about. At the school there's tremendous excitement.

ANE *makes for the door.*

MALLA. And I, who went away:

BIRGIT. [*To* ANE] Wait a moment! [*To* MALLA] What's the name of her over there?

MALLA. Ane.

BIRGIT. Wait, Ane! They say you are in it, too. Come back here!

MALLA. But what is it?

BIRGIT. A love affair.

MALLA. With whom?

BIRGIT. With Henning, the painter.

MALLA. He who was also running after——?

BIRGIT. Hush!

MALLA. The wretch!

BIRGIT. [*To* ANE] And they say you've been helping her?

ANE. I?—No, that's nothing but a lot of lies!

BIRGIT. There are people who say they have seen it. Helga and her friends have been coming to this house.

ANE. That may be. I couldn't stop that. But if there's anybody who's told Helga to leave all that love business alone, that one's me, I tell you. And you can bet your life on it!

MALLA. It's her father's fault—the bloodthirsty creature!

BIRGIT. There's Karen now.

KAREN *and* TURMAN *come in.*

KAREN. Helga isn't here, either?

BIRGIT *and* MALLA. No.

KAREN. My child!

TYGESEN. [*Coming out of the study*] Karen!

BIRGIT, TURMAN, ANE, *and* MALLA *are startled.*

KAREN. Dear! Are *you* back? God be praised! Then everything will be all right again! [*She breaks into tears.*

TYGESEN. Karen, Karen! [*He and his wife embrace*] Oh, to have you back again! [*In a low voice*] I can't live without you, Karen! I can't!—I have had such a dreadful time!

KAREN. [*Whispering*] So have I——

TYGESEN. [*As before*] I absolutely can't be alone!

KAREN. I don't know how I could leave you. And now this scare about Helga! I don't know how I could leave you both. I can't understand!

TYGESEN. But *I* can understand. It was I who drove you away. All geography and no love—that won't do, you see. But all love and no geography won't do either. Now, having left all the geography behind—I just *had* to come home!

KAREN. Oh, my dearest, it was nasty of me to go. But don't let us try to settle anything.

TYGESEN. No, don't let us try that!—So that's what you say, too?—No settlements! For settlements between married people are like throwing oneself out of the window a second time in order to discover how it happened the first time.

TURMAN. But, Tygesen, you are supposed to be in Bessarabia?

TYGESEN. [*Takes a long look at him; then he turns to his wife again and gives her a kiss; at last he says to* TURMAN] Goose! [*Then he kisses his wife again.*

MALLA. But, Karen—you're forgetting all about the conditions!

TYGESEN. [*Lets his wife go and takes a step toward* MALLA] Boo! [*Then he goes back to* KAREN *and leads her aside*] We must be alone, we two!

KAREN. Yes—but Helga, dear? All at once I was seized with such restlessness that I was *forced* to return.

TYGESEN. And I—I was dreaming about mother! Then you know something is in the air. I travelled day and night— Let us all start out to look for her.

ANE, BIRGIT, MALLA, *and* KAREN. Yes!

ANE *and* BIRGIT *leave.*

TURMAN. What's all this?

MALLA. It's—oh, something you can't understand!

TYGESEN *and* KAREN *start arm in arm, followed by* MALLA *and* TURMAN.

ANE. [*Meeting them in the hall, says triumphantly*] Here comes Miss Helga now!

BIRGIT. [*Outside*] Here's Helga!

MALLA. Is Helga there?

ANE. Yes!

TURMAN. Alone?

ANE. Of course!

KAREN. [*Outside*] My girl!

HELGA. [*Outside*] Mother!

KAREN. [*Outside*] Oh, to have you back again!

KAREN *and* HELGA *enter with their arms about each other.*

TYGESEN. Helga!

HELGA. [*Runs up to him*] Dad!

TYGESEN. I have been terribly alarmed about you. [HELGA *draws back from him in evident embarrassment*] What is the matter with you, child?

KAREN. Is anything the matter? [*She takes the girl and leads her gently forward*] Oh, tell me, Helga!

HELGA *throws herself at her mother's neck.*

TYGESEN. [*Joining them, says in a low voice*] You had a rendezvous? [HELGA *sobs and nestles closer to her mother;* TYGESEN *takes her by the arm*] Is he a scoundrel?

HELGA *cannot speak, but nods assent.*

KAREN. Tell me about it!

TYGESEN. Merciful heavens——!

HELGA. [*Raises her head, still sobbing*] He—he——

KAREN *and* TYGESEN. He——?

HELGA. He didn't come!

KAREN. He didn't come!

TYGESEN. He didn't come! Hurrah!

ALL THE REST. He didn't come!

KAREN *kisses* HELGA, *takes her in her arms, and begins to swing her around.*

TYGESEN *takes hold of both and dances with them.*

TURMAN. [*Pulling* TYGESEN *by his coat-tail*] I can see now that you want to get rid of Malla.

TYGESEN. Oh, you can see that?

TURMAN. Yes, but—I don't want her!

TYGESEN. Professor Turman doesn't want you, Malla!

TURMAN. But, Tygesen——?

MALLA. So you think *I* want him? Oh, no, I won't have anything to do with either of you. I want to take my snuff all by myself, I do!

Curtain.

BEYOND HUMAN MIGHT

(OVER EVNE: ANNET STYKKE)

(1895)

BEYOND HUMAN MIGHT
(OVER EVNE: ANNET STYKKE)

ACT I

A deep chasm that ends in a turn toward the right. It is just possible to catch a glimpse of the sea in the background. Both sides of the chasm are dotted with small huts placed without the least suggestion of order. Some of them are nothing but deck houses, while others are made up of the whole stern part of some sailing-vessel. Other shanties lean against the steep sides of the chasm in such a way that the lanes in their rear are on a level with their upper stories. At the bottom of the chasm, in the foreground, is a sort of square with a fountain and a water-trough, both very dilapidated. Houses surround the open place.

In the extreme foreground, at the right, there stands a ramshackle old building. All its window-panes are broken. The front door is almost torn off and hangs across the doorway. A bent metal pole projects from the front of the house. It carries a signboard with the word "Hell" painted on it. The sign is nearly torn from its fastenings.

A muffled rumbling fills the place and hardly ever ceases. It comes from an iron bridge that spans the chasm. Now and then the whistle of an engine is heard, followed by the deafening clangour of a passing train. When this ceases, one hears again the hollow and comparatively suppressed rumble of carriage-wheels and the tramp of horses.

Before the curtain rises, a funeral hymn is sung in unison. As the curtain rises, a coffin—the size of which shows that it holds the body of a grown-up person—is being carried out from one of the shanties at the left. It is followed by another coffin, apparently holding the body of a child, and then by a third that is still smaller.

The square is crowded with workmen, women, and children. All the men have bared their heads. Many of the men and women are crying. Some of the children are howling loudly. The people fall in behind the coffins, with FALK, *the minister, at their head. He wears the canonical dress of a pastor in the Established Church of Norway. Beside him, leaning on his arm, totters a man of advanced age,* ANDERS HOEL, *known as* BLIND ANDERS. *Thus the procession makes very slow progress.*

Every one present falls into line. The procession passes along the bottom of the chasm until it reaches the bend, where it disappears to the right. The hymn continues to be heard long after the last people have passed out, the sound of it mounting upward as it recedes into the distance.

While the singing is still heard, an elderly man sneaks timidly out of the ramshackle building at the right. He wears a long coat that falls in heavy folds around him, and he acts as if he didn't know where to turn. He stares at the maltreated building and finally he sits down on its front stoop which stands separated from the house far out in the square.

At that moment another man becomes visible far up on the path along which the procession passed. His clothes are ragged, threadbare, and greasy. On his head, which is very large, he wears a very small cap. The shoe on his right foot is almost new, but on the left foot he has merely an upper to which a sole is fastened with strings. His face is very red. His

hands are almost purple in colour. His hair is dark and cut very short.

This man, whose name is OTTO HERRE, *comes down the road with head erect and swinging movements. On seeing the man sitting on the stoop, he stops for a moment. Then he resumes his advance, but more slowly.*

At last the man on the stoop—named ANDERS KOLL, *but generally known as* MOUSIE—*becomes aware of* HERRE *and turns away from him.*

MOUSIE. [*Muttering to himself*] I guess he must 'a' got out after all.

HERRE. Behold the humble Mousie! Seated in front of his torn-up hole. Sunk in deep thought.

MOUSIE. [*As before*] He's got a load on, sure enough.

HERRE. Broken, the windows—and sadly drooping, the sign—like a drink that is dripping away. The stoop seized by a hurricane and hurled across the ocean of your destiny. And you yourself clinging to this last remnant of the vessel that was your life. [*A queer, clucking sound is heard from* MOUSIE] And the door! That door which has seen so many beggars enter and so many kings pass out! Now it's hanging there like a drunkard whom the bouncer is chucking into the street.—That's how matters look where the wrathful hand of virtue has descended.

MOUSIE. So news gets into the jail, too?

HERRE. They have made scrambled eggs out of your furniture. Your glasses and bottles have had to turn somersaults to the accompaniment of their own music.

MOUSIE. A fellow what's on his uppers had better look out—there's still a lot of glass around.

HERRE. And your well-filled whiskey barrels——

MOUSIE. [*With a sigh*] Oh, mercy—yes!

HERRE. They were rolled out—turned into torrents—by clerical command.

MOUSIE. He stood exactly where you are now, giving his orders.

HERRE. But are there no authorities, then? Is there to be no law at all down here in Hell? Haven't you made a complaint?

MOUSIE. No, this strike here has made 'em clear crazy. If I had complained, they'd 'ave torn me to pieces. They were going to do it anyhow—they'd already started. But then that fellow Bratt took a hand.

HERRE. And all this because Maren lost her reason—nice, honest Maren!

MOUSIE. [*Half rising*] I couldn't help that, could I?

HERRE. Maren, who killed both her brats!—And I who have seen them running around here, sockless and curly-haired! What is life anyhow?

MOUSIE. And then she killed herself—herself, too!

HERRE. And she killed herself, too! First the children—then herself. Like Medea—the great Medea!

> For naught, for naught, my babes, I nurtured you,
> And all for naught I laboured, travail-worn,
> Bearing sharp anguish in your hour of birth.[1]

MOUSIE. [*As before*] I couldn't help that, could I?

HERRE. O calamity-producing Mousie: speak thou the truth at this open grave! Thus biddeth the Word. How much more, then, at three open graves! *She had bought the whiskey from you!* For she had to get drunk before she could face her gruesome task.

MOUSIE. How could I know she was getting ready to—? I am as clean of it as a baby's shirt.

HERRE. Weep not, Mousie! It behooves not your rank and

[1] Euripides, *Medea*. Translated by Arthur S. Way.

profession. I assure you that if I had been out—what I mean to say is: if I had been here—then it would not have happened. But how was it that people didn't get their reason back when they saw the whiskey running away—literally running away?

MOUSIE. Oh, it ran like water in a brook, man! Just like that!

HERRE. But didn't they go down on their bellies? Didn't they lap it up? Didn't they use the hollows of their hands for cups? Didn't they come running with pitchers and pails?

MOUSIE. It ran all over the parson's feet. "That's where it belongs," he said.

HERRE. Bratt is powerful. But there are limits to everything. Marvellous happenings! Like earthquakes! Is—has Bratt taken the place of the Lord down here?

MOUSIE. Oh, I guess the Lord never had such power in Hell as that fellow has.

HERRE. He didn't follow the coffin. Or I would have said howdy to him. We were together at the university.

MOUSIE. No, he's in his office now.

HERRE. In his office? But he isn't a minister any longer!

MOUSIE. The strike office, I mean. It's him that has started this strike here, and all the money goes to him.

ELSA, *nicknamed* THE FLEECE, *comes in; she is brown-skinned and full-bosomed.*

MOUSIE. There's the Fleece.

HERRE. Good morning, my cup of hot coffee! All my senses are drinking in your fragrance. What are you after, anyhow?

THE FLEECE. None of your business, Mr. Soak! So you've got out at last?

HERRE. I met the funeral, but failed to notice your chaotic

locks in it. All Hell was there, but not you, its guardian spirit. You were attending to some early business, were you not?

THE FLEECE. Oh, leave me alone!—Why didn't you go along with Maren and her children? She used to be kind to you. And that's more than she was to me.

HERRE. Maren *was* good. Why didn't I go along? I'll tell you—tell you frankly: had I gone, I should have had to speak! Then I should have wiped out the sun, the moon, and all the stars for every one who entered that chapel. I should have said: it wasn't she who is lying here—that nice, hard-working Maren—it wasn't she who killed her children. It wasn't she who took her own life sinfully. No, it was those people up there that killed her. Those cannibals that live in the big city have eaten her—her and her children. The strike went to her head. The strike took her reason. For her nervous soul possessed that fulness of conscience which is lacking in her murderers. Under such conditions she didn't dare to continue living. She couldn't bear the responsibility of letting her two little girls face hunger and degradation. It seemed to her that life was a beast of prey, and she wanted to save them while they were still—— [*He breaks down.*

THE FLEECE. Really, now and then it does one good to listen to you. The way you put things——

HERRE. You're a fine woman, Elsa. There is nothing the matter with your heart.

MOUSIE. The end of it will be that they'll eat us all up, I suppose.

A COARSE MALE VOICE. [*Heard from the houses at the left*] If we don't eat 'em first!

HERRE. What sort of mountain spirit was that? A word of warning out of the future. A message from the huts to the palaces.

THE FLEECE. [*Softly to* MOUSIE] What made me come here was to tell *you* to look out, Anders.

MOUSIE. [*In the same tone*] Lord, what's up now? Can't they leave me alone on top of this?

THE FLEECE. [*As before*] I fell in with a cop up there, and he asked me if it was true you went around with a big bottle of whiskey in your coat-pocket.

MOUSIE. No, no, it isn't true.

He puts his hand mechanically to the tail pocket of his coat.

THE FLEECE. [*As before*] And if you sold it on the sly around here?

MOUSIE. [*Rising, horrified*] There you see! They want to ruin me outright!

HERRE. [*Comes up to him and tries to put his arm around him*] Is that true? Have you—have you——?

MOUSIE. [*Trying to get away*] Leave me alone! Leave me alone, I tell you! You—he-he, I'm so ticklish! Oh, you—he-he!

HERRE. There is something back there. When you move, it describes a ponderous circle.—Elsa!

MOUSIE. It isn't true!

THE FLEECE. I'll hold him for you!

MOUSIE. Don't touch me! I'll holler!

THE FLEECE. Then the police will come and take both you and your bottle.

A FEMALE VOICE. [*From the right*] What are you doing to the Mousie that makes it squeak so?

MOUSIE. No, no, no!

HERRE *pulls a big bottle from* MOUSIE'S *coat-pocket.*

MOUSIE. It's ordered! It's an order, I tell you! It isn't mine any longer!

HERRE. [*Having drunk deeply*]
Ordered or not——
It goes right to the spot.

THE FLEECE. Oh, well—let me now——!

HERRE. [*After another draught*]
It's the noblest juice
You did ever produce!

THE FLEECE. Let me now—let me now!

HERRE.
All right! Do your worst,
You soul athirst!

MOUSIE. This is the worst kind of larceny.

THE FLEECE. Never in the world did I taste anything better.

HERRE. Ah! Those people up there—they know—they know pretty well why they want to keep us from this dream of the gods.

MOUSIE. You've drunk all my profit for many days.

HERRE. Have a drink yourself, you poison-bearer!

THE FLEECE. [*In a low voice*] Do you know what I have been thinking of again and again these last days? [*Drawing closer to* HERRE] Why shouldn't we set fire to the whole city up there some stormy night? Just set fire to it!

HERRE. Pooh! Then that rabble would seek safety in the open. No [*mysteriously*], there are a number of mining galleries left in the rock on which the city is built. Left from the time when the river came through here. Right here where we are standing now. For *we* are living in the old river-bed. This whole Hell here is nothing but the old river-bed. These old galleries, which start back of the houses over there and run into the rock in all directions, should be looked up. Then they should be loaded with powder and dynamite and

all sorts of explosives—with electric wires laid through it. Ha, ha, ha! What a revelation of stinking, rotten guts we should have then!

THE FLEECE. Hooray! What a hell-fry!

She snatches the bottle from MOUSIE *and takes a long drink.*

MOUSIE. But then we'd have to fly, too, I suppose.

THE FLEECE. [*Handing the bottle to* HERRE] Would we have to go along?

HERRE. [*Having had a drink and then permitted* MOUSIE *to take back the bottle, he gives* ELSA *a grandiose look*] Could we wish for a more beautiful lot?—At times, when I have given some thought to the final exit of one Otto Berg Herre, my thoughts have pictured it something like this: accompanied by thousands through the dawn-red gates of immortality. At *my* command, like slaves obeying some Oriental master, they would have to change dress in order to follow me in festive garments. After a life full of big promises—but also full of cares and regrets and frequent misunderstandings—to reach one's goal at last, in the moment of death—what a coronation that would be! To see one's name flashed upon the sky in sun-gilt script and read by all the world! To seat oneself upon a *sedia curulis* built out of the bent necks of millionaires! Ah, ah—with one's feet on their money-bags! And all around one the curses and applause of mankind like the swelling blast of an orchestra—like a roaring sea of homage—ah!

A FEMALE VOICE. [*From the right as before*] Now they're coming back!

MOUSIE. [*Scared*] Who's coming?

THE FLEECE. [*Speaking simultaneously with* MOUSIE] Coming, you say?

HERRE. [*Simultaneously with* MOUSIE *and* ELSA] What is it?

A Female Voice. The funeral, don't you know? But they're still up above.

The Fleece. Well—then there's plenty of time.

Mousie. [*In a low voice*] But these here galleries—there's a lot of people have been talking of them—but you can't get through them, they say.

Herre. There we are—there we are!

Mousie. There's water in some and worse in others.

The Fleece. Yes, I have heard that, too.

Herre. That's just like this race of slaves! The least difficulty, a little water, a few grains of sand—and it's enough to break the wings of their vengeance, to scare away their cravings for freedom and light!

A Female Voice. The parson's along!

Herre. [*Frightened*] The parson? Pastor Bratt?

A Female Voice. No, the real parson.

Mousie. Falk——

Herre. Oh, that one! He's nothing but a humbug. And so I might tell him to his face any time. I saw enough of him in the Students' Society.

The Fleece. Now I'll clear out.

Herre. [*Softly to her*] I'll be with you in a moment.

Mousie. Would you—would you say that to the parson?

Herre. What?

Mousie. What you said—what you called him——

Herre. A humbug? Why, to tell him *that*——?

Mousie. Will you—if you will, I'll give you a crown—sure as you live!

Herre. In advance!—In advance!

Mousie. No-o-o——

Herre. In advance!

Mousie. And if you don't say it, then——?

HERRE. I'll go right up to him and tell him at once—on my word of honour! If you give it in advance!

MOUSIE. I'll give you half of it—there!

The procession has begun to stream down the path. At that moment a train passes across the bridge. FALK *is now dressed in ordinary clothes. He is in the rear and a little behind the rest. As he appears,* HERRE *meets him and tries to get by him.*

FALK. Why, dear me—isn't this Otto Herre—our *magister bibendi?*

HERRE. [*Saluting him*] Yes, your grace! That is, what is left of him.

FALK. [*To himself*] Dear me, dear me!

[*He begins to search all his pockets.*

HERRE. And yet, take it all in all, perhaps the better part of him. But the times have not been very propitious, your grace.

FALK. No, I can see that. [*In a lowered voice*] Come to me if you get real hard up. To-day I haven't—I have really given away what little I had. Here's half a crown—it's all I have.

HERRE. Thanks, your grace! Many thousand thanks. It's as I have always told the people here: it's your heart that makes you a man of genius. [*He starts to leave.*

MOUSIE. [*Who has been hiding behind a corner, intercepts* HERRE *on his way up*] But—but——?

HERRE. You didn't give me more than half.

[*He disappears.*

FALK. [*To* HANS BRAA] Could you believe that that man is timid and shrinking when sober? If I were like him, I suppose I should be drinking, too.

BRAA. Yes, we know. We have often noticed it.

FALK. He's like the Rose of Jericho: dry as dust and a

commonplace grey. But when you put it into water, it begins to expand, and it smiles like the Lord's own day.—Well, folks, I told you up there, at the graves, that I had something on my heart which it would be more fitting to speak of down here. [*He ascends the stoop, and the people group themselves around him*] What I began with up there, and what I ended with as well, was this: we must not judge her! That must be left to Him who knows us all. Peace be to her outworn heart! Peace to her name when mentioned among us!—The worst feature of things like this strike here is that they bring so many to despair. Some say it happens only to the weakest. What I say is that it happens to the finest, to those who feel their responsibility most keenly, and who for that reason often are the best. Just as the best, as a rule, suffer more, take upon themselves greater sacrifices, and pay more of the cost. [*It is evident that the workmen agree with him in this*] I don't want to put the blame on anybody. But I suppose there is more than one of you who have discovered how dreadful it is when the children come crying: "I want something more to eat—oh, mamma, I want something more to eat." [*The crowd is stirred; he continues quietly*] I contribute my own mite every day.

A Man. [*In subdued tones*] Yes, you've been good to us.

Several. [*In the same way*] Yes, you have.

Falk. Otherwise I shouldn't have the right to come here and say anything at all. My opinion, my advice, is, that a strike as big as this one—the biggest we have ever had—mustn't last long. An unexpected amount of help has come from the outside. But there are too many mouths to be fed. There are already those who know what hunger means. And many more will have to learn it. But nothing is more contagious than despair. Bear that in mind! And so a time will come—may come sooner than you expect now—when no

one remains capable of controlling the forces that have been let loose. I have seen signs of violence and murder——

BLIND ANDERS. Yes, violence and murder!

FALK. What was that you said, old man?

BRAA. Oh, Anders, he's got only one thing to talk of.

FALK. Well, let him talk!

BLIND ANDERS. It was this thing that happened—my poor——

FALK. Don't I know it? Didn't we follow her together?

BLIND ANDERS. No, not her. I had another daughter, younger than her—who got a place up there in the city, in one of the fine houses. And there they laid violent hands on her.

FALK. Yes, yes. We remember. But that isn't the question now, Anders.

BLIND ANDERS. But you were talking of "violence and murder." *That* was violence. And she took it so hard that it ended in murder, too. God help us and protect us!

FALK. My dear Anders, we know all this. [*He remains silent for a while*] To get back to our present problem—despair is a dangerous comrade, and it is already present among you. You must act in such fashion that you are not held responsible for what was never in your own minds.

BRAA. It's those people up in the city who are responsible.

FALK. The past, Hans Braa, is more to blame than the present. And those who bear the blame in the present are generally found on both sides.

BRAA. No, it's all with them, up there!

FALK. Not all of it!

SEVERAL. Yes, yes, all of it!

FALK. Do you dare to declare yourself quite free from blame?

ALL. Yes, yes!

FALK. Now your temper is up because you have been suffering. And I shall say no more about it. But if you *want* peace, then it's of *no* use for you to look upon the others as a lot of thieves.

BRAA. But when they *are* thieves?

SEVERAL. You bet they are!

FALK. Like those that were crucified, perhaps. You know, even thieves may be converted.

PETER STUA. Reg'lar beasts of prey, that's what they are!

FALK. That's going it one better! But let me tell you something now: you should leave threats and defiances to the rich. Theirs has been the power, and so they have grown accustomed to be brutal and to settle everything by force. Don't be stupid enough to take after them. Poverty has certain advantages which no wealth can gain. Don't throw them away! Poverty has its own blessings——

BRAA. Have you tried 'em, pastor?

FALK. I know rich and poor alike, and in many things the poor are better off than the rich.

HANS OLSEN. Yes, in rags and vermin.

FALK. That's *your* experience? [*A few laugh*] I'll tell you in what respects I think the poor are better off. They often know how to be content with very little. They are always kind to each other—truly self-sacrificing, that's what they are. And they have more patience, more forbearance——

A COARSE MALE VOICE. [*From a house high up on the left side of the chasm*] Why don't you go and tell that to the rich?

Everybody turns to look in the direction from which the voice came.

FALK. I have done so! I cringe no more to the rich than to the poor.

COARSE MALE VOICE. Aw, we don't want any more of that Sunday-school drivel down here!

A Female Voice. [*Heard as before from the right, far up along the hillside*] Why don't you listen instead, you Muck-Peter over there? You're the dirtiest bum in all Hell, you are!

Coarse Male Voice. Aw, shut up, you——!

Falk. That kind of forces—if despair is added to them—you think you can control them? No more than I can control the sea out there!—And now I want to tell you—for they have been to see me—that there are those among you who would like to go back to work again——

Peter Stua. Just let 'em try!

Several. [*In quick succession*] Is that true?

Almost Everybody. Yes, let 'em try! [*Wild excitement seizes the crowd*] We'll 'tend to them! Tell us who they are! Names! Names! [*Finally the crowd yells in time*] Names! Names!

Falk. [*With a gesture of authority that stills the uproar*] Now you have violence in mind! If you knew them, you would use violence against them! And when it comes to that, then murder is not far off! [*Deep silence*] Then more than one of you would be ruined for life. And so would your children and your poor wives——

Blind Anders. That's true!

Braa. The people up there would have to answer for it.

Falk. Yes, if you could make them see *that*, then——

Peter Stua. They'll *have* to see it!

Aspelund. The day will come when they'll see it.

Falk. But for that day *you* cannot wait. You must deal with them as they are, both men and conditions. Water won't run down-hill faster than the grade demands. To me it looks as if the Lord wanted you to practise patience until His time comes. And frequently it comes when we least expect it.

COARSE MALE VOICE. [*From the left as before*] Aw, why the devil don't you quit?

FALK. You won't get very far by calling for the devil, folks! I fear you'll have to turn to Him who patiently lets His sun rise over good and evil——

FEMALE VOICE. [*From the right*] There comes Bratt!

SEVERAL. Who—Bratt?

BRAA. Yes, he promised to come to-day.

A MAN. [*Who has run up the path*] Yes, it's him!

All turn around. A few move toward the background; others follow them gradually. At last only three old women remain near FALK.

FALK. Well—why don't you go with the rest?

AN OLD WOMAN. [*Embarrassed*] No, you're too nice for that.

FALK. Three—it isn't much! But then they mean it, at least! [*He steps down from the stoop.*

BRAA. [*In the background*] Three cheers for Bratt!

The crowd breaks into wild cheering. BRATT, *who becomes visible at the bend leading to the right, waves his hand to silence them, but without effect. The ovation continues uninterruptedly until he reaches the stoop.* BRATT *mounts it, and for a while silence reigns.*

BRATT. 'Way up there, where I was standing, I could hear my predecessor in this parish say that the Lord patiently lets His sun shine upon good and evil alike. What I want to say first of all is that, down here, the sun never shines.

The crowd laughs and repeats the last words.

BRATT. I have really met those who don't know that we down here are living at the bottom of a deep river. There used to be falls in the river, not far from its mouth. Those falls ate their way further and further back. That's what

made this cleft in which we live. And that's what led to the discovery of all the wealth in the rocks on both sides of the river. Then they turned the water aside and started mining. That's what made the big city up there. But all the reward the workmen got for what they dragged out into the sunlight was that they were thrust out of the sunlight themselves, down into this place. They earned so much for the others that the ground up there became too expensive for poor people. And so they had to be satisfied with what they could get for nothing down here. But to this place the sun never comes.

The people talk among themselves.

BRAA. That's the way it is.

FALK. [*Before he leaves*] Be careful now, Bratt!

BRATT. [*Looks for a moment at Falk; then he resumes*] Little by little it became the rule that all who went to waste up there in the big city, or who wasted themselves, were cast down here——

BRAA. Human garbage!

BRATT. Into "Hell," as they soon began to call it. . . . Here it is dark and cold. Here few work hopefully, and no one joyfully. Here the children won't thrive—they yearn for the sea and the daylight. They crave the sun. But it lasts only a little while, and then they give up. They learn that among those who have been cast down here there is rarely one who can climb up again.

SEVERAL. That's right.

BRATT. Here we are now. But those who own all that vacant land we call Sunnywold have just told us that it is something we cannot have. And at the highest point of that land, where the old fort used to stand, there Holger has reared his new palace—and there, in "The Castle," representatives of the factory owners from all over the country are to meet

this evening. There they are to discuss how they can hold us down so that we may never get up.

COARSE MALE VOICE. [*From the left*] Yes, let 'em try!

BRATT. I ask you, for Heaven's sake: let them by all means gather up there. That castle was built while the distress was increasing all around the country—as if in spite. It is quite as it should be that they meet there and give us their answer from there. I am told that the whole castle will be illuminated to-night!

COARSE MALE VOICE. Yes, let 'em try!

ALL. [*As before*] Yes, let 'em try, let 'em try!

BRATT. But, friends, don't you understand that nothing could be better for us? This very day, when we have followed Maren and her two children to their graves——

BLIND ANDERS. Yes, Maren——

BRATT. Then they start an illumination! [*Excitement and anger are shown by the crowd*] By all means, let them go on like that! It will bring us many friends we didn't have before. And more than one will tremble before the God who is thus mocked. Let them illuminate! Those people who have taken the sun away from you! [*The crowd mutters*] You know, don't you, that everything that carries infection is best at home where the sun cannot reach it? The sun kills off the microbes—those of the soul as well as of the body. The sun gives strength and cunning. The sun is company. The sun breeds faith! All this is known by the rich people up there. They learn it at school—and yet they let you live down here! They have let you live here where disease and rottenness live side by side with you—here, where children lose their colour and thoughts their clearness—here, where clothes and minds alike grow mouldy. They have preachers and churches; they have hymns and prayers; they have a tiny bit of charity, too—but a God they have not. [*Excitement*] Can

we wait until they get one? Generation after generation, in misery and sin?—What was it that happened here three days ago? For whom were the bells tolling to-day? And we ask if it is possible to wait? A few homes for workmen here and there—do they end the bitter need of thousands? What is there to herald the coming of better things? A new generation up there? Listen to what their young people answer for themselves: "We want a good time!" And their books? The books and the youth together make the future. And what do the books say? Exactly the same as the youth: "Let us have a good time! Ours are the light and the lust of life, its colours and its joys!" That's what the youth and their books say.—They are right! It is all theirs! There is no law to prevent their taking life's sunlight and joy away from the poor people. For those who have the sun have also made the law.—But then the next question is whether we might not scramble up high enough to take part in the writing of a new law. [*This is received with thundering cheers*] What is needed is that one generation makes an effort strong enough to raise all coming generations into the vigorous life of full sunlight.

MANY. Yes, yes.

BRATT. But so far every generation has put it off on the next one. Until at last *our* turn has come to bear sacrifices and sufferings like unto those of death itself. Only a little while ago we saw one of us break down under them. But are you aware that she has not died in vain? Her desperation has struck panic in more than one conscience. Never before have the contributions to the strike fund poured in as they did yesterday and to-day. Several have given large sums—from one man alone we got two thousand to-day.

This news is received with enthusiasm.

BLIND ANDERS. [*With emotion*] You don't tell me!

BRATT. What do you say about remembering her—her fears and her sufferings? As a symbol of the misery we want to end? As a cry of help from all those generations that have perished? As a desperate prayer for deliverance?

ALL. [*Deeply moved*] Yes, yes!

BRATT. And let us all try our utmost in self-sacrifice! I am now getting along with one half of what I generally live on. No one knows how long the ordeal will last. I have persuaded many others to do like me. And they agree with me, that it feels like a consecration. As I stand here now, my hands are aflame and I seem to be charged with electricity. My senses are more keen, my faculties more clear—fused, as they are, into a passion for sacrifice. . . . You must practise the art of doing without! Controlling yourself, you control those others who need to be guided—and of those there is enough!—Keep up your courage! Every day brings new support from all quarters. Never before have the workers stood so close to their goal. Never before have we been united to the same extent. Never have we had a firmer grip or a better foothold. O that it might be granted the generation which is ours—that it might be granted *us*—to raise the workers of this country out of the darkness and the dampness for all time to come—out of the cellar holes, so that they may live on the sunlit side of life!

A wave of emotion passes through the crowd.

BRATT. [*Who has covered his face with his hands, says quietly as he looks up at the crowd again*] You had better go up to the strike office. The money is ready for you. [*There is a lot of happy excitement*] And when you have got your money, you must select the committee that is to call on Mr. Holger to-day. You remember—he is to have his answer to-day.

Everybody looks happier. Many go up to BRATT *to press his hand as he steps down from the stoop. Then they*

hurry away toward the city in groups, eagerly talking. Just as BRATT *himself is about to leave, after all the rest are gone,* ELIAS *appears.*

ELIAS. [*Coming from one of the houses at the right*] Bratt!

BRATT. Elias! [*Hurries toward him and leads him down the stage*] At last! Where have you been? Just when we needed you most, you disappeared.

ELIAS. I, too, had my work to do.

BRATT. Do you think I doubt it?

ELIAS. [*Smiling*] And, for that matter, you have seen me.

BRATT. Without knowing you?

ELIAS. Yes. But—what did you want me for?

BRATT. First of all, I was afraid that the money we have been receiving—that entirely too much of it came from you. And I wanted to warn you, Elias.

ELIAS. Thanks! Do you know who was the last man Maren Haug talked with?

BRATT. You?

ELIAS. Yes, me.

BRATT. What did she say? That she was in despair——?

ELIAS. She said: "Some one has to die." That's what she said. "They'll never pay any attention to us before," she said.

BRATT. Was that what she said—? A case of conscious martyrdom, then? Do you think so?

ELIAS. I do.

BRATT. But more than one martyr has been out of his reason.

ELIAS. So they have.

BRATT. And the whiskey? Everybody says that she had been drinking.

ELIAS. To get courage, yes! Which is only one more proof, it seems to me.

BRATT. Why didn't she ask us for more assistance? She would have got it.

ELIAS. I, too, offered to help her.

BRATT. And then?

ELIAS. "I will only take it from outsiders," she said.

BRATT. Really!—Yes, there was something remarkable about that woman.—But it is wonderful! Oh, there is much that is great among the poor people down here.—So she offered herself as a sacrifice?

ELIAS. I am sure of it.

BRATT. I can see that it has made a deep impression on you. [ELIAS *nods assent*] You don't look well. You ought to go to your sister. Have you seen her recently?

ELIAS. Not in the last few days.—Do you recall that remarkable boy and girl who were with her—the children of Sommer?

BRATT. Of course! It would be impossible to forget them.

ELIAS. They are not with her any longer.

BRATT. What does that mean? They were given to your sister, were they not?

ELIAS. No, their uncle has taken them now.

BRATT. Holger? But the last thing Sommer said was that your sister should have them.

ELIAS. That didn't matter. Now the uncle has taken them. "Their parents are dead," he said, "and I am their parents. I am going to make them my heirs, and they are to be brought up in accordance with *my* will."

BRATT. In accordance with *his* will! So they are also to become sweaters of labour?

ELIAS. Of course. Those people take the future itself away from us. It's a thing that haunts me night and day—even more than what happened to Maren. *For it is worse.* Think only, that they take the very future away from us.

BRATT. [*Looking him firmly in the eye*] That kind of feeling should be turned into action, Elias!

ELIAS. [*Meeting his glance firmly*] Well, there is no doubt about that!

BRATT. [*Putting his arm within that of* ELIAS] Do you remember how you and your sister came to me down here?

ELIAS. Now, that's strange!

BRATT. What is?

ELIAS. Your mentioning that. For it is just what I have been thinking of all day.

BRATT. You came so radiantly. You had just got your inheritance from that American aunt of yours. You were rich.

ELIAS. And we came to find out what we could do with it.

BRATT. I showed you what I was doing. Your sister wouldn't join us—it was untried ground, she said. And instead she bought land and built her hospital up there. But you——

ELIAS. [*Placing his free hand on that of* BRATT] I chose to stay with you!

BRATT. [*Pointing in the direction from which* ELIAS *first appeared*] And the day you bought that miserable little house you were as happy as a lark.

ELIAS. And I haven't regretted it once. To me this is the only kind of life worth living.

BRATT. [*Gravely*] But how is it then, Elias, that something has come between you and me?

ELIAS. What are you talking about?

BRATT. I can hear it in the ring of your voice right now! I could see it in you before you had spoken a word—that there is somebody who has taken you away from me!

ELIAS. [*Freeing himself*] Nobody could! Nothing but death!

BRATT. But something has happened——?

ELIAS. So it has.

BRATT. [*Anxiously*] What is it?

ELIAS. [*After a moment's thought*] You ask me so many questions. May I ask you just *one?*

BRATT. My dear boy, what is it?

ELIAS. [*With a peculiar forcefulness*] Both of us believe that God is something we have to work out within ourselves.

BRATT. Yes.

ELIAS. That He is evident in the eternal order of the universe, and that to man this order means justice—the growth of justice.

BRATT. And of goodness.

ELIAS. But isn't He evident in war also? Could He stand outside of that?

BRATT. Is *that* your question?

ELIAS. Yes.

BRATT. [*After having looked at him for a moment*] There are so many kinds of war.

ELIAS. This is the kind I am thinking of: to sacrifice oneself in order to destroy those that will evil.

BRATT. If that kind of war comes within the order that is justice——?

ELIAS. Yes.

A MAN IN BROWN *has stolen up close to them without being noticed by either one of them. At this moment he puts his head in between them, with his face close to that of* BRATT.

BRATT. Ugh! What is the use of that sort of thing? Why must he always come like that?

MAN IN BROWN. [*Crouching on his haunches, with his hands resting on his knees, begins to laugh wildly*] Ha—ha—ha—ha!

He hops around like a bird until, at a sign from ELIAS, *he suddenly disappears.*

BRATT. Is it never possible to have a talk with you without that fellow getting in between us?

ELIAS. What do you want me to do? He has attached himself to me. It is his one happiness in this world. Do you want me to chase him away?

BRATT. No, of course, I don't. But can't you keep him from breaking in like that whenever anybody is talking to you? That's too much.

ELIAS. He thinks it's funny. Why not let him do it, then? Otherwise he suffers so terribly. This very day I have had to promise him that we are to live and die together.

BRATT. What does that mean?

ELIAS. Oh, at times he has wonderfully lucid moments. So I had to promise him.

BRATT. You are *too* good, Elias.

ELIAS. No, *I* am not too good, but mankind has too much to bear. He with the rest. He is one of those Holger drove out of his employ because they dared to vote our ticket. It was more than the man could face, and so he went to pieces, and was thrust down to us.

BRATT. I know it.

ELIAS. Well—and then he began to follow me wherever I went. He would be crouching outside my house like a dog, so I had to let him in.

BRATT. But when you give yourself to everybody like that —then you impair your efficiency where it is most——

ELIAS. [*Interrupting*] Pardon me for interrupting you, but I am so restless to-day. I cannot stand still and listen. And I have so little time to spare. I really came here just to see you. I wanted so badly to have a look at you!

BRATT. But what we were talking of, Elias——

ELIAS. Don't let us talk of it any more!

BRATT. Are we not to talk of it?

ELIAS. Afterward you will understand so much better. I cannot stand seeing so much wrong-doing! I cannot stand hearing that the others are going to win!

BRATT. Are the others going to win, you say? Has it got so far with you, that you can believe such a thing for a moment?

ELIAS. That far—yes! [*Putting his hands around* BRATT'S *head*] I *do* love you! For all that you have been to me. From the first day you picked me up here—until your present moment of alarm.

BRATT. Yes, Elias, you do——

ELIAS. Now *you* must be quiet. I love you who everlastingly dare to believe, and to live in accordance with your belief. You who take hold so that the whole country can feel it. You whose cry goes right into our souls: "Courage, courage!" To the youth that means: "Push ahead—farther still!"

BRATT. [*Frightened*] But farther than this, Elias—that would be to——

ELIAS. You mustn't say anything. Nor must I!

He throws his arms around BRATT, *hugging him as hard as he can; then he lets him go only to take hold of his head with both hands; having kissed him twice, he lets him go again, and runs out in the direction from which he first appeared.*

BRATT. But, Elias—? You have no right to run away without telling me what it is.—Still further—? Now? Horrible! [*He runs after* ELIAS] It must be stopped! [*He calls out with all his might*] Elias! [*As the curtain falls, he is still heard crying*] Listen, Elias! Elias!

Curtain.

ACT II

An artistically furnished library of lofty proportions. The entire rear wall is covered by drapery. At the left there is an arched window, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. The walls on both sides of the window are covered with bookshelves that also reach to the ceiling. At the right, facing the window, there is an arched doorway, which is likewise flanked by bookshelves. A table stands in the foreground toward the left. A number of architectural drawings are lying on the table.

HOLGER. [*Seated in a huge armchair that stands between the table and the foremost bookcase*] Then there is nothing but the basement floor to be changed?

HALDEN. [*Standing*] Yes, and not much of that. But then there is the extension.

HOLGER. The extension? There is not going to be any extension. Did I forget to tell you about that?

HALDEN. You did.

HOLGER. The extension was meant for my nephew and niece. At that time we took for granted that they were going to live with Miss Sang.

HALDEN. Oh, are they not to live with Miss Sang?

HOLGER. They are to live with me. [*Pause.*

HALDEN. Then there is hardly anything left to do.

HOLGER. There is no reason, then, why Miss Sang shouldn't move in. What do you say?

HALDEN. As I understand it, she was going to move in to-day.

HOLGER. [*Looking hard at* HALDEN] You haven't seen her?

HALDEN. [*Without looking at* HOLGER] Not for a long while.

A knocking at the door is heard, and HALDEN *hastens to open it.*

HOLGER. [*Rising at once and going toward the door*] There she is now, perhaps.

HALDEN *opens the door.*

BRAA. [*Still outside*] Is Holger here?

HOLGER. [*Seating himself again*] Here I am.

HALDEN. A delegation of workmen.

HOLGER. So I can hear——

HALDEN. Well—can they come in?

HOLGER. Oh, yes, let them!

HANS BRAA, ASPELUND, *old* ANDERS HOEL, HENRIK SEM, HANS OLSEN, *and* PETER STUA *enter.*

HOLGER. [*Seated as before*] Who is that blind old man?

BRAA. That's Anders Hoel—he's the father of her——

HOLGER. Is he employed in any of the factories here in town?

BRAA. No, but his children——

HOLGER. I won't negotiate with anybody but the workmen from the factories.

BRAA. He's the father of Maren—her that we buried today—her and her two children. And so it seemed kind of proper, as we thought, that he should come along and speak for——

HOLGER. That's all right. Take him outside.

Nobody moves. Nobody answers.

BLIND ANDERS. Am I to be put out?

BRAA. So he says.

BLIND ANDERS. [*Quietly*] Is there anybody can tell more than I about the hard times down there?

BRAA. But he won't have it, don't you see?

BLIND ANDERS. We-ell? But he ought to know Maren ain't the only one I've lost.

HOLGER. Take that man out so we can start—eh?

HALDEN. Come, Anders, I'll help you out.

BLIND ANDERS. Who're you? Seems to me I know your voice——

HALDEN. This way, Anders.

BLIND ANDERS. No, I won't! I've been elected, I tell you!

SEVERAL. [*At once*] You must!

BRAA. We can't get anything done before, don't you see!

BLIND ANDERS. Oh, you can't?. Well, well—then I want to say a couple of words first.

HALDEN. No, no, Anders!

SEVERAL. Naw!

BLIND ANDERS. So you think—? All I wanted to tell him was that if she was here now, that smallest girl of mine—that poor little thing, what——

HOLGER. [*Rising*] Get out, all of you! Eh?

ASPELUND. [*To* BLIND ANDERS] Can't you hear? That's no joke! And it's we that'll have to pay.

HOLGER *seats himself again.*

BLIND ANDERS. Well, then we'll be quits. For what you've done, I've had to pay for.

HALDEN. Oh, be sensible now, Anders! Come along with me!

BLIND ANDERS. Who're you anyhow?

BRAA. It's Halden, don't you know?

BLIND ANDERS. Oh, it's Halden! He's all right, they say. Well—well, I'll go along with Halden.

HALDEN. That's a good fellow! And I'll see that you get something to brace you up.

BLIND ANDERS. But we're in that man Holger's house, ain't we?

HALDEN. Yes.

BLIND ANDERS. Of course, I ain't had nothing to eat but scraps o' bread for two days, but sooner than eat a bite or drink a drop of that man Holger's—[*with deep emotion*] sooner I'd do like them girls o' mine.

HALDEN. It's my own, what you're going to have.

BLIND ANDERS. Oh, so! Oh, well—yes—well——

HALDEN. Now we'll go, then?

BLIND ANDERS. Now we'll go. [*Takes a step toward the door and turns around again*] But now you'll have to tell that man Holger— Yes, you know, *he* is still sitting over there!

SEVERAL. Get out now, Anders!

BLIND ANDERS. [*In a thunderous voice*] *They* thought a whole lot more of their honour than you do over there!—You and the likes of you!—Now I'm going! Now I've said what I wanted to. [*He goes out slowly, led by* HALDEN.

HOLGER. Well, what is it you want?

BRAA. To-day's the day we was to meet you, ain't it?

HOLGER. Oh, that's it? I had forgotten.

BRAA. We were looking for you down in the city first, but then they told us you were out here. [*Pause.*

HOLGER. Well, you know that I represent *all* the factory owners now—eh?

ASPELUND. And we *all* the workmen. As far as that goes, it's all right. [*Pause.*

HOLGER. Have you any proposition to make?

BRAA. Yes.

ASPELUND. Sure we have!

HOLGER. What is it?

BRAA. That we pick a board of arbitration together.

HOLGER *makes no reply.*

BRAA. And we thought of putting in a bill about it, too. So it could be made a law, don't you see?

HOLGER *remains silent.*

BRAA. We workmen feel as if there might be a future in that.

HOLGER. But we don't.

ASPELUND. Naw—you don't want anybody to get in between——

HOLGER. [*Without paying any attention to him*] Have you any other propositions?

BRAA. We have authority, if *you've* got any others.

HOLGER. Propositions? No!

BRAA. Is it just as it was before?

HOLGER. No, it isn't.

ASPELUND. [*Quietly and timidly*] Is there anything more than there was before?

HOLGER. No propositions. *We* make no propositions. Eh?

BRAA. [*Tensely*] What is it, then?

HOLGER. Conditions, that's what it is!

BRAA. [*After an exchange of glances between the workmen, says in a subdued and hesitant manner*] Might we hear what kind of condition it is?

HOLGER. I fear you are not done with striking yet. And if so, it's of no use.

The workmen are seen talking among themselves.

BRAA. We've agreed we'd like to hear it just the same.

HOLGER. The condition, you mean? There are several.

ASPELUND. [*In a wholly different tone*] So, there's a lot of 'em! Well, is there any reason why we shouldn't hear about them? Now's as good a time as any.

HOLGER. There is *this* reason against it: that only the factory owners of this city have agreed to them so far. But we

want *everybody* to agree with us. Every factory owner in the country. We are going to meet to-night. We are going to have a trade union, we too!

BRAA. So we've heard. But as the conditions have to do with us first of all, I think we might be told about them.

ASPELUND. Well, that's what *I* think, too.

HENRIK SEM *and* HANS OLSEN. Yes.

HOLGER. As you like. The first condition is that no workman can be a member of Bratt's union, or of any other union that hasn't our approval.

The workmen exchange glances, but without a word or change of mien.

HOLGER. The next one is that you cannot subscribe to Sang's paper, or to any other paper not approved by us.

HANS OLSEN. And I suppose we've got to go to church, too?

BRAA. [*Silencing him with a gesture*] And what do we get if we agree?

HOLGER. What you had before. Eh?—However, I have to inform you that those are not the only conditions.

ASPELUND. I think if I was you, I'd try the other way around. Making the people a little happier instead.

HOLGER. It isn't in our power to make you happy.

ASPELUND. Oh, yes! Oh, yes! Let's have a share of the profits, and let's get land up here to live on——

HOLGER. People who want what belongs to others can never be happy. Eh?

HANS OLSEN. But those who've got hold of what belongs to others can be happy enough.

HOLGER. [*Striking the table with his hand*] Have I got hold of what belongs to others? What would you be but for me? Eh? Who has built up all this—you or me?

HANS OLSEN. I guess there was a few who helped to build

up—from the first—and now there's thousands that are helping.

HOLGER. Helping? Yes, my ink-well has also been helping? And the power, and the machines, and the telegraph, and the ships, and the workmen. I put the workmen last, because every so often they try to smash all the rest to pieces. And neither the ink-well nor the power nor the machines nor the telegraph can be called that stupid.

ASPELUND. You're playing a high game—I must say!

HOLGER. The game should have been still higher long ago. Eh? Then, perhaps, talent and capital might even have found time to make decent living conditions for the workmen.

HANS OLSEN. Yes, in Hell!

BRAA. No, no—that kind o' talk doesn't lead to anything.

ASPELUND. Yes, it does! It leads to what's bad.—For Heaven's sake, come and see how we're living down there!

HOLGER. Well, why do you strike, then? You're wasting a lot more than we could have given to help you.

BRAA. Why wouldn't you do *anything* before we struck?

ASPELUND. Why can't you do anything now? And be done with it?

HOLGER. I would call that putting money into your strike fund. Eh? No, *this* time you'll have to bear all the consequences of your behaviour. For now *I* am in command.

[*Long silence.*

BRAA. [*To the rest*] I guess we may just as well get out of here at once. We can't do anything here.

ASPELUND. No, Blind Anders will be doing about as much sitting outside.

HOLGER. It's my opinion, too, that we haven't got anything new to tell each other.—You'd better come back when you are done with all that strike nonsense. Eh?

BRAA. So we're to be done up this time, are we? P'r'aps it mightn't work after all!

ASPELUND. We've got something like honour, too—just as Anders said before.

HANS OLSEN. The way you talk! We—honour? Naw, they've got all the honour! Them as take it from the women folks—and then send 'em off to America!

HOLGER. Although this has nothing to do with the strike, or with me either—let me tell you that, once for all—yet I'll answer it. It's the second time you've come forward with it. And it's all the time in your paper.—Every class has its own sense of honour. But it's by our women we can best measure how much of that kind of sense we have. Such as *our* honour is, such are they.

ASPELUND. Yes, there's a lot in that.

HOLGER. But when *your* women are such that they can be caught by hand like fledgeling birds—what sort of honour have you got then?

PETER STUA. [*Who until then has not said a word*] I'll be damned if I stand for any more of that!

He swings himself across the table. HOLGER, *who has risen to meet him, bends him backward against the table, as* BRAA *and* ASPELUND *run up to them from opposite sides.*

BRAA. Cut out that kind of thing!

HOLGER *and* PETER STUA *let go their hold of each other.*

ASPELUND. You'd better wait. There'll be time for that too.

HOLGER. Now you'll have to get out!

HALDEN. [*Rushes into the room*] What's up here?

ASPELUND. Oh, they've got to fighting about honour.

HANS OLSEN. [*In a rage*] All you big fellows have a lot of

sons in America that you don't want to hear of. And none of them comes back here to teach you what honour is.

HOLGER. [*Having arranged his clothing*] Open the door, Halden!—Eh?

BRAA. [*Close to* HOLGER] There is something I must talk of. It can't wait.

HOLGER. But the rest will have to get out at once.

HANS OLSEN. Well, we ain't hankering to stay either.

[*He goes out.*

PETER STUA. We'll come back again. But I guess it'll be in a different way.

BRAA. Aw—get out now!

PETER STUA *goes out.*

ASPELUND. [*Quietly, as he is leaving*] Yes, indeed, you're playing a mighty high game. [*He goes out.*

HOLGER. [*Sharply to* BRAA] What is it?

BRAA. You can see for yourself that there are some here that can't be controlled much longer. And it might be a good thing to keep that in mind.

HOLGER. Well, why don't you keep it in mind? Eh?

BRAA. Things might happen here which *everybody* would ask the Lord to spare us.

HOLGER. No, I wouldn't! For that would be the very best thing that could happen.

BRAA. That many thousands——

HOLGER. The more, the better!

BRAA. Well, I'll be hanged!

HOLGER. Eh? Now you are standing on our feet. And then we could put you at a proper distance again for at least another generation. And in the meantime something might happen.

BRAA. Well, then there is nothing left for me to say here.

[*He goes out.*

HOLGER. [*To* HALDEN] I can't help thinking, whenever I see that fellow, there must be gentle blood in him.—And that's true of Peter Stua, too.—All who dare—all who dare to revolt—have upper-class blood in them. Careless crossing that, Halden!

HALDEN. Careless?

HOLGER. I like those fellows. Especially the one who came at me. Splendid chap. I should like to know who was his father. Upper-class blood. It almost seems as if I could spot his nose. Eh? The rest are nothing but slaves. Born slaves. Pure and simple.—Was there anything you wanted, Halden?

HALDEN. Miss Sang has been waiting quite a while outside.

HOLGER. And why didn't you tell me at once? Eh? [*He hastens to the door and opens it; not seeing anybody, he steps into the next room; a moment later he is heard to say outside*] You mustn't think it's my fault. Eh? If I had only known——

RACHEL. [*Beginning to speak while still outside*] Mr. Halden wanted to announce me. But I didn't think I ought to prevent the workmen from finishing their talk with you.

Both she and HOLGER *are in the room by the time she stops speaking.*

HOLGER. Well, they treated me to some of that bitter beer your paper has been brewing. [*At his words* RACHEL *is seen to flinch; he doesn't notice it, but leads her to a sofa, where he sits down beside her*] I have had to hear that those fellows have made my wealth, and that accordingly I am playing the part of an arch-thief. Eh? Quite an amusing tale! Here I have built up a market for the labour of many thousand men. Add to those all who are depending on them, and they make a whole city. And so one fine day, before I am through with it, they turn on me and tell me it is theirs! Eh? And when I

won't make concessions at once, they rebel. I forgive them, and everything seems to be all right again—when a crazy preacher drops down among them and begins to proclaim the law of God. But the law of God is that everything should be turned topsy-turvy. Now we can't even build and live as we please, for then we are taking the sun away from *them*. To make up for this, the city is asked to build houses for those people in Sunnywold—in Sunnywold, the pride and joy of the whole city! Why not lodge them in our own houses? And as it's the "law of God"—why not in heaven as well? Eh? [*Rising*] I tell you, Miss Sang, if we handed out everything we have, bag and baggage—in a year it would be all over with the factories, the capital, the trade, and all of us would be in the poorhouse! Eh?—I beg your pardon, Miss Sang! Here I am treating you to the same sort of bitter brew, only drawn from a different barrel. [*He seats himself again*] There is no one I respect more than you, my dear Miss Sang. But I happen to be made in such a way that my temper is a part of my motive power. And as there had been such a lot of it stored up during that meeting——

RACHEL. [*Smiling*] Oh, I have to hear all sorts of things these days.

HOLGER. I thought you had already moved in, Miss Sang. And I came here only to hand over the deed to you. It was registered yesterday. [*He takes a document from the table*] Now the park and the house are yours under the law. And I regard it as a pleasure and an honour to have the chance of placing this deed in your hands.

Both rise.

RACHEL. A magnificent gift, indeed! Now my hospital ought to be secure or I'll prove myself sadly incapable. I thank you with all my heart, Mr. Holger.

[*She takes his hand.*

HOLGER. The document is a work of art, as you'll see. That's Halden's doing, of course.

RACHEL. [*Opening the deed*] Yes, so it is. I'll have it nicely framed, and then I'll hang it right opposite the entrance. A thousand, thousand thanks! [*They bow to each other*] Is the deed entirely in my name?

HOLGER. Of course!

RACHEL. But it's a gift to the hospital?

HOLGER. It's a gift to you. And you will dispose of it.

RACHEL. Well, I hope only that I may prove equal to it——

HOLGER. You have already proved that.—When are you going to move in?

RACHEL. I thought of doing so at once—if you have no objection?

HOLGER. There are some books here I want to take away. Nothing else.

RACHEL. You can't imagine how happy my sick people are made by this. To-day we have knocked a hole in the wall between the hospital and the park. And everybody who could crawl out of bed had to come and watch the work.

HOLGER. I suppose you have a lot to attend to, and so we'll leave you—Halden and I.

RACHEL. Oh, there is something I wanted so badly to ask of you, Mr. Holger. Although, of course, you never listen when I ask you for something.

HOLGER. There is nobody, absolutely nobody, to whom I would rather listen. [*He motions her to be seated*] What is it?

[*He seats himself again.*

RACHEL. The big meeting of all the delegates that is to be held to-night—don't hold it in the Castle! Don't make any display! Don't illuminate the Castle!

HOLGER. The Castle is one of the finest pieces of archi-

tecture in this country. And the site of the old fort, where it is located, makes a very fine setting for it. Eh?

RACHEL. That's true. Mr. Halden has every right to be proud of his work. There is no one who disputes that. But——

HOLGER. *But*—yes? The workmen have declared the building and its location a direct affront to themselves.

RACHEL. Many cruel deeds were committed in the old fort.

HOLGER. And now they are covered up with beauty. Is there anything criminal in that? Eh?

RACHEL. The time during which the Castle was built——

HOLGER. The time? When times are hard is the best time to make work for people. Is there anything criminal in that either?

RACHEL. It has been misunderstood. Remember what happened during your housewarming.

HOLGER. A little dynamite—what of it? Sheer futility. Those deep old moats prevent them from getting near the place.

RACHEL. But don't give another excuse for it.

HOLGER. Not only will the banquet and the illumination be repeated, but I am going to put three bands at the big——

RACHEL. Oh, no, no!

HOLGER. [*Rising*] Eh? Do you mean to say that we are to give way because of their evil plotting? Not while I am in command. It is just in times like these that the Castle has a message for certain people. Did you see it illuminated?

RACHEL. No, I didn't go out at all.

HOLGER. That's where you missed it. [*He goes toward the background*] Fortunately I had an artist on hand to paint it. A very clever fellow. Here you'll see.

He pulls aside the drapery in the rear, thus revealing a beautiful painting that covers the entire wall. It shows

a mediæval castle with towers and turrets, crenelated walls, and a broad moat in front. The upper edges of the building are outlined with electric lights and the whole structure is strongly illuminated. Further down on the picture may be seen a city with its harbour, which is protected toward the open sea by a long breakwater. There are electric lights along the breakwater, too. The atmospheric effect is that of a clear fall evening with waning light.

RACHEL. [*Who has risen*] Yes, that's wonderful! Indeed, it's wonderful!

HOLGER. That's how I believe things are going to look when this earth once more finds a place for big personalities, who dare and can proclaim their own selves. When we get away from ant-heap ideas and centipedal dreams—back to big men with genius and will.

RACHEL. It's fascinating!

HOLGER. To me the most important feature of the whole struggle is to make room for personality. Here you may witness the restoration of a structure belonging to a time when personality did have elbow-room. With towers that rise and rule. With massive walls whose strength and shape inculcate a religion of pomp, of power. Eh?—Do you want it to stay here, or shall I take it away?

RACHEL. I want it taken away.

HOLGER. [*Hurt*] You want——?

RACHEL. Yes.

HOLGER. [*To* HALDEN] You hear that? Will you please see that it is taken away at once.

HALDEN *nods assent.*

HOLGER. I mean it literally. At once. Eh?

HALDEN *remains quiet as before and goes out.*

HOLGER. There is something about that fellow——

[*He checks himself.*

RACHEL. You don't like Halden?

HOLGER. Have you noticed that?

RACHEL. I noticed it the first time I saw the two of you together.

HOLGER. Oh—then! That was not to be wondered at. Your hospital was being built right outside my park. I heard that a young lady was using her private fortune in that way, and I became curious. Eh? And so, one day, I walked right into the place. And whom should I find there with you? Halden. He was your architect. And he hadn't said a word to me about it.

RACHEL. He doesn't say very many.

HOLGER. What is it that has corked him up?

RACHEL. I don't know. He has had to make his own way.

HOLGER. That's what all of us have had to do.

RACHEL. But I imagine it comes a little harder in America.

HOLGER. How did he come to be your architect?

RACHEL. Because he wanted to. And was willing to do the work for nothing.

HOLGER. Has he done it for nothing?

RACHEL. Everything.

HOLGER. [*Takes a turn across the floor*] Did he come to you himself?

RACHEL. No, somebody else brought me a message from him.

HOLGER. [*Stopping in his walk*] Can you tell me who that was? Can you—or don't you want to?

RACHEL. Yes. It was my brother.

HOLGER. Does Halden know your brother?

RACHEL. Yes—or rather, I don't know. My brother brought me that message from him: that's all I do know.

HOLGER. I have often wondered what kind of acquaintances that man might have. I am not one of them.

[*He picks up his hat.*

RACHEL. Well, that's more than I know.

HOLGER. [*After a brief pause*] I hope now that you may feel at home out here—you and your convalescents.

RACHEL. Thank you ever so much! You must come over when we are in here—so that all of them may have a chance of thanking you!

HOLGER. I will——

RACHEL. [*Coming closer to him*] Have I made trouble for Halden by saying that he knew my brother? For, really, I don't know that he does.

HOLGER. You are greatly concerned about Halden.

RACHEL. I don't want to harm anybody.

HOLGER. You need have no fear.

RACHEL. And that other matter I spoke of—? For the sake of all the people, Mr. Holger, who may be tempted into wrong-doing——?

HOLGER. I have already told you: there is no one to whom I listen with greater pleasure than you. But you know also that we have different religions, you and I. Eh?

RACHEL. People are scared. They say that old mining galleries are still in existence under the Castle.

HOLGER. That's true of the greater part of the city.

RACHEL. Suppose they should try——?

HOLGER. [*Placing himself right in front of her*] THAT WOULD BE THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN!

RACHEL. [*Drawing away from him*] You are awful!

HOLGER. The religion of the masters, Miss Sang.

RACHEL. And this is what you want to teach your nephew and niece?

HOLGER. Yes, it is. I want to teach them the only thing that can save all of us.

RACHEL. [*Urgently*] The damage you do will be tremendous then—! And you have no right to do it, either!

HOLGER. No right, eh? I, who bestow all I have on those two young people?

RACHEL. If you were to bestow ten times as much on them, Mr. Holger, it wouldn't give you the right to rob them of their souls.

HOLGER. Well, if I ever—eh?

RACHEL. Can it be called less than that? Everything those wonderful young creatures know and cherish—all that you want to take away from them.

HOLGER. In order to give them what is still better.

RACHEL. But which they despise, Mr. Holger. No one has the right to shape the future by force—not by force!

HOLGER. That'll have to be fought out.

RACHEL. Whether the children should be taken away from their parents?

HOLGER. The parents are dead in this case.

RACHEL. No living parents have a greater right to their children than have these who are dead. And you know it, Mr. Holger.

HOLGER. Do you mean that I should respect the silly notions of the parents for that reason—even their silly notions? Credo and Spera! Parents who are capable of naming their children Credo and Spera—eh?

RACHEL. "I believe"—"thou shalt hope"—are those such silly notions? Thus had the parents disposed of these children before they were born. And that's something we ought to respect, Mr. Holger.

HOLGER. Respect silly notions! What kind of hope and faith is it a question of? [*In an amused tone*] It is not in

this world, Miss Sang, that those who are first shall be last, and the last first.

RACHEL. That's something you know nothing about, Mr. Holger. The future will be settled by the masses—by the vast masses.

HOLGER. Hm—! That'll have to be fought out.

RACHEL. There is a current at work here that we cannot stop.

HOLGER. [*Merrily*] Well, I'll get these two out of the current anyhow.

RACHEL. And you dare to do that, Mr. Holger?

HOLGER. Dare—? Please don't interfere with me in this.

RACHEL. You have refused to let me keep them. I can do nothing about that. But you cannot refuse me the right to influence them.

HOLGER. Oh, I cannot? Eh? The children are not going to obey me, you mean? THEN THEY MUST GO AWAY FROM HERE!

RACHEL. [*Horrified*] Away from here? Send the children away? [*With deep emotion*] Mr. Holger, all you will gain by it will be to make the three of us frightfully unhappy. And besides—after the loss they have just suffered—this, too! Oh, you cannot do such a thing!

HOLGER. Can't I? Eh? I'm going to do it at once. No matter how much it hurts me to say "no" to you—but you force me to do it.

RACHEL. Every time I ask you very hard for something, I get a "no." And every time you say that it hurts you.

HOLGER. I shouldn't respect you as highly as I do if you were different from what you are. I hope you will grant me the same compliment—Miss Sang!

HOLGER *goes out.* RACHEL *drops down on a chair and begins to cry. Somebody is heard knocking at the big*

window. RACHEL *goes over to the window, her face brightening as she moves.*

RACHEL. Do you want me to open —? [*The moment she gets the window open, she cries out*] No, no, no! [*She shrinks back.*

CREDO. [*Eighteen years old; comes with a leap through the window*] Good morning, Rachel!

SPERA. [*In her sixteenth year; enters in the same manner*] Good morning, good morning!

All three embrace enthusiastically.

CREDO. What did he say to make you sorry?

RACHEL. Oh, you noticed——?

BOTH. Of course, we noticed.

RACHEL. It was about you, of course—something about you!

CREDO. He won't let us see you?

SPERA. It won't do him any good.

RACHEL. Worse than that. He wants to send you away. Away from me!

BOTH. He wants to send us away, you say?

RACHEL. [*Deeply stirred*] So that you cannot see me at all.

Both children embrace her.

CREDO. He'll never be able to do it!

SPERA. We'll never obey him in that!

CREDO. Oh, why haven't we learned to fly yet?

SPERA. If he stops our mail, we'll use pigeons. And we'll keep a diary for you to read.

RACHEL. Yes, yes!

CREDO. And you who can afford it, you'll come to us often, won't you?

RACHEL. Will I come—? Yes, wherever you are!

They embrace again.

CREDO. I'll invent something that makes the voice clearer than the phonograph does now. That doesn't give you the

voice itself, but just a kind of shadow of it. I have been making a study of it, and I think I know where the trouble lies.—And then you'll sit in your own room, Rachel, and hear us talk to you. You'll feel that we are always about you, Rachel, Rachel!

RACHEL. I'll send you telegrams and letters every day, you may be sure.

CREDO. Until he understands how useless it is to separate us.

SPERA. And perhaps lets us come together again—what d'you think?

RACHEL. Something new and wonderful has come into my life with you two.—I can no longer exist without you.

BOTH. Nor we without you.

CREDO. You are the only one we can go to with everything.

SPERA. Do you know why we came just now?

RACHEL. No.

SPERA. That toy of Credo's——

RACHEL. Does it fly?

SPERA. Yes, all around the room, way up under the ceiling.

CREDO. I have got it!

SPERA. I assure you: round and round and round, without bumping into anything.

CREDO. I have discovered how to steer it, you know—I have got it!

RACHEL. But isn't this something entirely new?

CREDO. It's something that will grow, I tell you. Just wait!

RACHEL. So now you can make the circle in which it moves as wide or as narrow as you want?

CREDO. Exactly!

SPERA. All he has to do is to set it as he wants it.

RACHEL. Can't I come and see it?

SPERA. That's why we came, you know: just because we wanted you to see it.

CREDO. We came to bring you along with us.

RACHEL. But I don't know if that would be right now——

A bell is heard ringing at the main entrance outside.

RACHEL. Nobody must find you here.

SPERA. [*Leaping out through the window*] Good-bye for a while!

CREDO. [*Taking a long start and clearing the window with a flying leap*] Hurrah for the finest woman on earth!

A knock is heard at the door.

RACHEL. Come in!

ELIAS *enters.*

RACHEL. [*Running to meet him*] Elias—at last!

ELIAS. [*Meeting her half-way*] Rachel—oh, Rachel!

They stand for a few moments with their arms about each other.

RACHEL. [*Stroking his hair*] How pale you look, Elias! And worn out! What is it?

ELIAS. [*Smiling*] The time's so big, and our strength so small.

RACHEL. How long it is since we saw each other!

ELIAS. For the same reason. I didn't have the strength.

RACHEL. I can see that you have overworked.

ELIAS. Yes, I can't even have the nights to myself.

RACHEL. Not even the nights?

ELIAS. And we don't get enough to eat.

RACHEL. But, dear—what's the use of *that?*

ELIAS. We must practise self-sacrifice, says Bratt. And he is right. But the effect of it has been somewhat unexpected.

RACHEL. Why don't you sleep nights?

ELIAS. So this is where you are to live, Rachel?—This is what he has given *you*—while he's refusing us everything.

RACHEL. He has given it to the hospital. It is to be used for the convalescents.

ELIAS. [*Going around, looking the place over*] This he has done now—as if there were nothing else that made any demands on him! Are you to live here, Rachel—in this room here?

RACHEL. Yes, and sleep in the room next to it—the one you passed coming in.

ELIAS. You have chosen peace for your share, Rachel.

RACHEL. Not exactly peace, Elias. There is a great deal of responsibility, and a great deal to do.

ELIAS. I know it, Rachel, I know it. All I meant was—I cannot understand how anybody can live as he was living in this big house—how anybody dares, while so many others—Have you heard about Maren Haug and her two children——?

RACHEL. Yes, yes, I keep track of everything.—Oh, Elias, if you knew how my thoughts have been with you these last days!

ELIAS. Perhaps that's why I have felt more homesick than ever before—more even than at the time father and mother still lived, and we were in the city.

RACHEL. That's because you are not happy.—Tell me, Elias: have you any faith in the strike?

ELIAS. [*After a glance at his sister*] Have you?

RACHEL *shakes her head.*

ELIAS. [*Shakes his head in the same way*] It will end in the worst defeat ever heard of. Maren Haug read the future. Oh—she is not the only one who won't survive it.

RACHEL. How it has made you suffer, Elias! I can see it.

ELIAS. The people in the city, Rachel, have another kind

of conscience than ours. Something else is needed to wake them up.

RACHEL. Can Bratt see it coming, too?

ELIAS *shakes his head.*

RACHEL. Since when have *you* seen it?

ELIAS. Since I began to stay away from both of you—from him as well as from you.

RACHEL. [*Disturbed*] You have not been seeing Bratt either?

ELIAS. I haven't had a talk with him until to-day.

RACHEL. Was it about——?

ELIAS. No.—But don't let us talk of this now! Let us go back for a little while to what used to be, Rachel.

RACHEL. Oh, I understand.

ELIAS. Sit down. I want to sit beside you. Let us talk of the old things we used to love. I am homesick, as I have told you.

RACHEL. Suppose we go back there, Elias? A trip to our old home? To visit our childhood once more. The fiord, the steep and naked mountainsides, the pale light of the nights, the parsonage with the long stretch of shore in front of it. The landslide must be covered with grass now. And many other things also. What a trip that would be! Nature would be the same—a little melancholy, but faithful, and magnificent in its wildness. And our memories— Reindeer as tall as father and mother— Elias, let's go home—now you are free—and so overworked— Oh, Elias!

ELIAS. I am not free, Rachel.

RACHEL. I call it free when you are unable to do anything.

ELIAS. Well, *that* isn't quite certain.

RACHEL. Oh, help them with money, yes—but you can do that through Bratt just as well. Oh, Elias—let us go!

ELIAS. There is something in that, Rachel.

RACHEL. It would make you well.

ELIAS. I'll answer you to-morrow.

RACHEL. Think if we could have another look at all the places where we used to play!

ELIAS. It's to those places my thoughts always go when I am homesick.

RACHEL. Do you remember how people used to say that they never saw one of us alone, but always the two of us together, and always hand in hand?

ELIAS. And that we were always talking our heads off — so that they could hear us from far off.

RACHEL. And what a lot of queer notions you had — all the strange things that would come into your mind, Elias!

ELIAS. But it was you who ruled — yes, it was! It's a fact, you have always been the one who ruled, until we separated awhile ago.

RACHEL. Do you remember the eiders — how tame they grew?

ELIAS. I remember every single nest.

RACHEL. How we used to look after them!

ELIAS. And protect them and bring them food. And the first time the mother bird took the little ones swimming — we were looking on in the boat!

RACHEL. And father was with us — just as much of a child as either one of us.

ELIAS. It was he who set us going. It was always some word from him that started us on all we undertook and all we thought of. Heaven and earth were not separated then. The miracles formed the rainbow that joined them. Our eyes were looking straight into paradise —

RACHEL. And we saw father and mother among the angels. Or rather, the angels had come down to them — we really believed it!

ELIAS. Wasn't the Lord himself talking to us? Whatever it was, it came from Him. Good weather and bad, thunder and lightning, the flowers, and all else that was bestowed on us. It came straight from Him. And when we prayed, it was face to face with Him. And we seemed to see Him, too, in the sea, in the mountains, in the sky. All of it *was* Him.

RACHEL. And do you remember when the bells were ringing—how we used to think that angels flew away with the sound of them, to ask the people to come to church?

ELIAS. Oh, Rachel, those who have lived through such things become exiles ever afterward.

RACHEL. Exiles ever afterward—yes, you are right.

ELIAS. Nothing is good enough after that.—No sooner had we left home than it was all over. Coldness and emptiness—and then the doubts. But I can tell you now, in plain words, what remains when all the rest is gone:—the craving for the boundless.

RACHEL. In you, perhaps—but I flee from it. Do you remember when father and mother died, and everything went to pieces, then you fled from it, too?

ELIAS. Yes, then we huddled close to each other. We didn't dare to believe—not even what we saw with our own eyes.

RACHEL. We were afraid of people.

ELIAS. Yes, do you remember——?

RACHEL. Most of all afraid that the sight of us might make them talk ill of father and mother.

ELIAS. Whom they didn't understand at all. But then, when our inheritance came, after Aunt Hanna had died, do you remember how we plunged back into the boundless at once?

RACHEL. Yes, you are right. Then it seemed at once as if all bounds had been wiped out.

ELIAS. That was the time we looked up Bratt. In his company that feeling grew, and it has been growing ever since.

RACHEL. In you, yes. But not in me. To me it comes with a sort of sacred horror, but not with any happiness.

ELIAS. It is of no use fleeing, Rachel. It is in us and about us.

RACHEL. The earth can find its way through boundless space—why not we, too?

ELIAS. Do you know, Rachel, that at times I feel as if I had wings? And no bounds—nothing to check me.

RACHEL. Death checks everything, Elias.

ELIAS. [*Rising*] No, not even death—especially not death!

RACHEL. [*Rising*] What do you mean?

ELIAS. [*Firmly*] That what we want to live must pass through death.

RACHEL. Through death——?

ELIAS. If you want to resurrect life, you must die for it. Christianity took its life from the Cross. Our country lives because of those who have died for it. There is no renewal except through death.

RACHEL. Is that to be applied here—? You want the workmen to die for their cause?

ELIAS. If they could do *that*, then their cause would be saved. Then they would win at once.

RACHEL. A revolution, in other words——?

ELIAS. The workmen in a revolution! Good Lord!—What day is it to-day? Monday. Well, that means Sunday doesn't come to-morrow. There is a whole week to Sunday. And in that week some mighty hard work will have to be done.

RACHEL. [*Stepping close to him*] There is only one way of working, Elias: by example—by good example!

ELIAS. [*Walking away from her*] If you could only guess how true that is. [*Coming close to her again*] To show them how to leap across all bounds, don't you see? To give them an example of that!

RACHEL. Across the bounds of life itself——?

ELIAS. First one across—then another. Isn't that the way things always begin. Then ten, a hundred, thousands—for it will need thousands before the millions will fall in line to take the leap, too. But after that there can be no resistance any longer. Then Sunday will be here. Then we shall have alleluias, triumph, "Praise ye the Lord!"—First comes the Baptist; then Jesus and the Twelve; then the Seventy; then the many hundreds, the many thousands, and lastly everybody, whosoever it may be! The life of resurrection cannot be bought in any other way.

RACHEL. Men have a lot of resistance in them. They hold back for all they are worth; hold on to what they have already gained. If they didn't, life wouldn't stay in its proper course, as does the earth.

ELIAS. But stronger than the rest are those who want the New. The eternal flame—the force that bursts all bounds—you find it in the pioneers. It is on them everything depends. The greater their courage, the greater will be their following!

RACHEL. Into death——?

ELIAS. *There is no other way!* And why? Because people will not believe fully in any one but him who dares to take that way. But let him take that final step—into the beyond—and he will be believed.—Look around you: do you find anybody in whom they believe fully now? Of course, those that are close to Bratt believe in him. But how about those that are further off? They are the very ones that need to be converted. But they don't even turn their heads. They don't care to hear what he has to say. He may get up

what we call a "movement"—not even then do they turn around. No, they leave it to the police!

RACHEL. Yes, you are right. That's the way it is.

ELIAS. But when you talk to them from the other side of life, *then they turn!* From there every word comes with so much greater force—for in there the echo is so wonderful. The great ones have to go there to get a hearing. There the speaker's platform has been reared by life, and from it the laws are proclaimed in tones that make them heard throughout the world—even by those that are hardest of hearing.

RACHEL. But it's dreadful to believe in that.

ELIAS. Dreadful?

RACHEL. I mean that dreadful things may come out of it.

ELIAS. Nothing can be more dreadful than what we already have, Rachel. What I proclaim is the religion of martyrdom.

RACHEL. That's it. Of course, there is something big about it.

ELIAS. More than that: once it has taken hold of you, there exists no other religion—none at all!

RACHEL. It's since you came to see this, that you have lost faith in the strike?

ELIAS. I have done everything in my power to push the strike—you can be sure of that.

RACHEL. I don't doubt it, Elias. [*Putting her arms around his neck*] But I am afraid on your behalf. That place down there is not the right one for you.

ELIAS. There is no other place where I should like to be.

RACHEL. [*Still with her arms around his neck*] But come home with me now—at once! Please—at once! Just to breathe the air of the sea, Elias! You can be sure that on the sea you won't think and feel as you do down there. The journey homeward too—all the different moods it will

make you pass through. You remember how it used to be, don't you?

ELIAS. [*Who has been gazing steadily into her face all the time*] In spite of all changes, you haven't changed in the least, Rachel. I think you could begin right now to take care of the eiders again.

RACHEL. Yes, if *you* were with me!

ELIAS. Let me have a real look at you——

RACHEL. Elias!

ELIAS. [*Drawing her still closer*] You're like the eider-down. When we were picking it, we used always to wonder how the young birds could tear themselves away from it—do you remember?

RACHEL. Yes. And yet they would go very, very far away from it.

ELIAS. Yes, they did go very far away. [*Almost in a whisper*] Good-bye, Rachel!

RACHEL. Are you going already?

ELIAS. I must—but I feel as if I couldn't take my arms away from you.

RACHEL. Hold me fast instead!

ELIAS. There is one thing in this life that we two never had.

RACHEL. Don't let us talk of it. What we have is so much greater.

ELIAS. And yet, in the midst of what is greatest, there are moments when we do nothing but long for what we never had.

RACHEL. Moments of tender dreams!

ELIAS. Moments of tender dreams!! [*Kissing her*] In you I kiss all those wondrous things that have been denied me. And then I kiss yourself—*just* you! [*Giving her a long kiss*] Good-bye, Rachel!

RACHEL. To-morrow, then?

ELIAS. You'll hear from me to-morrow.

RACHEL. You'll come yourself, of course?

ELIAS. If I can.—Dear little Eider-down!

He embraces her, kisses her once more, and goes toward the door; there he stops for a moment.

RACHEL. What is it, Elias?

ELIAS *makes a gesture with one hand as if brushing aside something.*

RACHEL *is still standing on the same spot, with her eyes on the doorway, when a knock at the window is heard. She wakes up and turns around. Then she goes to the window and opens it.*

SPERA. [*Leaping in through the window as before*] Who was that, Rachel?

CREDO. [*Coming in after his sister*] It was your brother, wasn't it?

RACHEL. Yes.

SPERA. He must be weighed down by some great sorrow.

RACHEL. Could you see that?

CREDO. Indeed! What is it he wants?

SPERA. Something big?

CREDO. Where is he going?

SPERA. Somewhere very far away, isn't he?

RACHEL. We are going together.

BOTH. Where? When?

RACHEL. To our home in the Northland. Perhaps to-morrow——

CREDO. But why did he say good-bye to you then?

SPERA. As if he were never going to see you again?

RACHEL. Did he?—No, you misunderstood! He acts like that when he is unhappy—always. He just won't let go.

A door-bell rings. CREDO *and* SPERA *disappear through the window again, and* RACHEL *closes it after them. Then a knock is heard at the door.*

RACHEL. Come!

BRATT. [*Enters, breathless and distracted*] Isn't he here?

RACHEL. You mean my brother? [*Eagerly*] Has something happened?

BRATT. Hasn't he been here?

RACHEL. Yes—didn't you meet him?

BRATT. He *has* been here—as I thought. What did he say? What has he in mind?

RACHEL. What does he intend to do, you mean?

BRATT. I can see that you don't know—that you didn't talk of it.

RACHEL. No—he will be back here to-morrow.

BRATT. [*Quickly*] To-morrow!

RACHEL. Or he'll send me word.

BRATT. What could he mean by that? [*Nearer to her*] Did he mention *me*, Rachel?

RACHEL. No—well, perhaps— I think he spoke of you quite casually.

BRATT. Only casually. [*With decision*] Then he is hiding something.

RACHEL. He said that you hadn't seen each other for a long while—until to-day.

BRATT. Did he also say that I had seen him and not recognised him? Tell me, did he? Which would mean that he had been disguised.

RACHEL. [*Smiling*] Elias? I can never believe it.

BRATT. He was never at home at night.

RACHEL. Yes, so he told me—that he didn't sleep, I mean. —But, for Heaven's sake, Bratt, what is it?

BRATT. I can't tell all at once. And you would probably

not understand me, as I have nothing definite to go by—no clear expression, no tangible act.

RACHEL. But if you don't——

BRATT. Yes, yes, it's just as certain nevertheless.—O that I should once more have to—! Wait a minute, please; I'll try to explain. That's why I came here, of course.—And he and I who have been such friends, Rachel! What hasn't he been to me——!

RACHEL. But that isn't over, is it?

BRATT. There is somebody who has taken him away from me!

RACHEL. What do you say?

BRATT. I didn't understand. How could I possibly understand? Seeing it was Elias. Not until we met again today—then I saw it at once! And the more he said, the more clearly I saw it.

RACHEL. I don't know yet what it is!

BRATT. There is somebody who has taken him away from me! It's as sure as that fall comes after summer, and death after fall.—By stirring his imagination. By starting his impetuous craving for achievement into more and more violent vibrations. Under such circumstances, how could he possibly feel satisfied among us? He was yearning to achieve something tremendous—all at once, with one blow.

RACHEL. [*Alarmed*] What could *that* be?

BRATT. Elias is so easily led astray—he is so quick to believe——

RACHEL. Yes, indeed. But who could——

BRATT. Somebody who has made the strike seem very petty to him—a mere mistake, or something still worse. So that Elias became horrified and was seized with dreadful remorse. Then the misery he had to see became unendurable to him. That's the way it must have happened.—So

he wished to make up for what had been lost—to make up by means of something that would draw the eyes of the whole world to our misery—something entirely new, something never heard of before. That's how it must have happened.

RACHEL. [*More and more frightened*] But what—what?

BRATT. Wait! You'll misunderstand him if I don't explain myself first. For the fault isn't his.—To me he didn't say a word—although the responsibility, the fault was as much mine as his—not a word of reproach. He wanted to take it all on himself—by enormous sacrifices. Now he has given us his entire fortune.

RACHEL. His entire fortune—Elias?

BRATT. Something he said made me suspect it. Now I know. It is true! He has given us everything he possessed. He had one thousand crowns left yesterday—this he gave us to-day—all at once.

RACHEL. [*In a tone that shows her admiration*] He shall lack for nothing!

BRATT. Oh, it isn't that! But in that way he has entirely misled us. He has been sending us these sums from east and west and north and south, until we were made to believe in a wide-spread public sympathy. But to-morrow it will be all over. Beginning with to-morrow, we shall only have enough to meet the barest necessity—and in a little while we shall not even have that much. Nothing but unspeakable misery!

RACHEL. My poor friend!

BRATT. You may well say that, for the blame is mine. You mustn't put it on him. Nobody can put it on him. That's why I *must* explain myself.

RACHEL. I am listening.

BRATT. A while ago I had reached my highest point of faith

in myself—where my feeling told me: "God is on our side!" My sense of power sprang from the reliance placed in me by the others—and nothing surpasses such a feeling. Then came Elias—and before I knew what was happening he had taken the ground from under my feet.

RACHEL. Dear friend!

BRATT. But how can a man who has gone through what I have gone through—how can it be possible for him to believe a second time? And to believe still more strongly because of his earlier mistake? That's where the trouble lies. And in this there is no mistake! [*He hides his face.*

RACHEL. My dear, dear friend!

BRATT. [*Looking sharply at her*] Now and then I have encountered a face that seemed to ask: "Can *you* find the right road? Can *you* lead others along that road?"

RACHEL *shrinks back.*

BRATT. [*Following her*] Tell me now: that was the doubt in your mind, wasn't it?

RACHEL. Yes.

BRATT. And that's why you didn't stay with me?

RACHEL. Yes.

BRATT. [*Goes up close to her, she drawing back from him*] I don't help people. I lead them astray. Instead of guiding, I misguide. I always achieve the opposite of what I want. All I can do is to overreach myself—make a mess of it—and bring all to despair. Isn't that so? There can be only one end to it: my downfall, with the curses of thousands following me.

RACHEL. [*Going up to him*] If anything should happen—I think so much of you—have from the very first——

BRATT. Yet you wouldn't stay with me?

RACHEL. You are a big man, and an honest man. But you take all my strength away from me.

BRATT. There you have said it yourself!

RACHEL. Yes, you carry me beyond what is clear to myself.

BRATT. There you see!

RACHEL. It's a part of your nature. You can't help it.

BRATT. A man of no matter how forceful nature—if his mind had been sown with sensible thoughts from childhood up, and if he had learned to watch and grasp real life instead of spending his time wool-gathering in another world—do you think he would lead anybody astray?

RACHEL. No.

BRATT. Here we come tumbling headlong out of the millennium—ready to save the world. But while we were straying abroad, the world has turned into a pretty tough problem —one that *our* brains are far from prepared for.—That's the thought that struck me while I was scrambling up the hill a moment ago.—Either our fancy is extravagant, or else our will. So there is always something in us that carries us beyond our power. We, who have seen people go to heaven in golden chariots; who have seen angels in the sky and devils surrounded by eternal fire; who have been hungering for miracles—how could we possibly have the kind of brains needed to deal with real life? Oh, no!—We are to be pitied, Rachel! We are always miscalculating the distance in front of us. We are always starting out haphazardly. Our consciences can be no reliable guides to us, for they have never been at home on earth or in the present. We are always striving for Utopias, for the boundless——

RACHEL. For the boundless——?

BRATT. Now you understand?

RACHEL. Elias——?

BRATT. Of course.—I have lured him on too far. I failed to understand that a nature like his should *never* have been dragged into a thing like this.

RACHEL. Never!

BRATT. Now he is plunging himself and us into that which knows of no bounds. Soon something dreadful is going to happen. When he gave all he had, he did it with the thought of giving himself, too.

RACHEL. Himself, too? Elias——?

BRATT. With the thought of sacrificing himself in order that he might carry hundreds of the others along with him to destruction. He must have been planning it for a long time, and now it is about to happen. Do you understand——?

RACHEL. No.

BRATT. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND——?

RACHEL *utters a cry and falls down senseless.*

BRATT. Yes, it's better so! If I could only drop down beside you, never to wake again!

[*He kneels at her side, bending over her.*

Curtain.

ACT III

An immense hall. A raised throne-like chair occupies the centre of the left wall, flanked on both sides by seats with richly carved and very tall backs that are fastened to the walls. The same kind of seats are along the other two walls, while, for this special occasion, a large number of chairs have been scattered over the floor.

In the rear are two huge, arched windows that do not break the line of seats. Doors in the same style as the windows appear on both sides close to the rear corners. The ceiling is of wood, with deeply sunk panels and beautifully carved. The walls are hung with draperies, coats of arms, and flags, and between these are placed fresh green branches.

HOLGER *is seated on the throne, with a small table in front of him. The seats and the chairs are filled with delegates representing the factory owners throughout the country. Other delegates are constantly passing in and out through the two doorways. Each time the discussion gets more heated they swarm in from both sides, only to disappear again after a while. Servants in mediæval costumes carry around tall tankards filled with various kinds of drinks, which they serve in goblets and tumblers.*

ANKER. [*He is standing on a dais just in front of the throne; on the dais is a small table for the speaker, and a larger one at which two secretaries are seated*] Once, on a very memorable occasion, some one remarked that "Beelzebub cannot cast out Beelzebub." I have made this my creed in the present

case. We must not set evil against evil. For in that way we can never bring out what is good in people. And if we cannot bring out what is good, we have nothing whatever to build on. And then there is no future before us.

[*He steps down in the midst of general silence.*

HOLGER. Mr. Mo has the floor.

MO. [*Ascends the platform, while a number of delegates come hurrying in from the side rooms*] On behalf of the fourteen—mind you: *fourteen*—factory owners in my city, I have the honour to express concurrence in Mr. Holger's plan. And we do this most heartily. [*Cries of "Hear"*] If the workmen organise against us, then we organise against them. ["*Hear*"] We give our support to the entire plan and to all its separate clauses.—I must say that Mr. Anker's speech has greatly surprised me. [*Cries of "Us, too"*] I think every factory owner ought to see the advantage of having all the factories governed by some central body to which they may turn for guidance in times of danger. And every one ought to understand the advantage of having every conflict with the workmen placed under the jurisdiction of this central body—serving at once as supreme court and highest executive. What we lose in freedom we gain in security. Most heartily do we subscribe to this plan. Let the workmen find out that, if they make trouble, they'll run up against a power that is not hampered by any kind of consideration. That will make them meek, I think —while it will make us more respected than we have ever been. As soon as we can get the factory owners of another country to form a similar organisation, we'll join hands with them. And in the end we shall have an organisation covering all civilised countries. Holger's plan is a splendid one. And I [*turning toward* ANKER] have no fear whatever of the consequences. The expression used by Mr. Anker—that this is "to place a small minority of mankind in opposition to its vast majority"

—is totally misleading. For mankind is, after all, made up of something else than factory owners and factory hands. There can hardly be any question as to which side offers the greater advantage to all the other people. ["*Hear, hear*"] We and the other people—there you have the state. The state belongs to us, as it has always done and always will. With all my heart I concur.

Repeated cries of "Hear, hear, hear" are followed by an outburst of applause and general conversation as Mo *steps down from the dais.*

HOLGER. Mr. John Sverd has the floor.

A DELEGATE. Question!

SEVERAL OTHERS. Question! Question!

ALMOST ALL. Question!

SVERD. [*Mounting the dais, places a portfolio on the table in front of him*] You don't need to be so explicit, my dear friends. I know fairly well how the land lies. As a chemist, you see, I am accustomed to analyse things. [*Laughter*] If nevertheless I stand here, it's merely because I have promised my colleagues—those whom I have the honour of representing—to place their opinions before you.

A DELEGATE. Which have been dictated by yourself!

ANOTHER DELEGATE. Dictator!

SVERD. If I exercise any dictatorship, it must be one of "persuasion."

MO. And now you're going to try it on us?

SVERD. [*Good-humouredly*] With your gracious permission—so I will. For I happen to have at my disposal an argument which no man of brains can resist.

SEVERAL. Well, well!

SVERD. I'll hand it out at once. As this hónourable gathering probably knows, our factories are located in the country.

And the workmen in these factories have already obtained almost everything that is in dispute here now!

SEVERAL. [*Interrupting him*] Oh, yes, in the country! That's another story!

A DELEGATE. [*At the top of his voice*] Smaller conditions—and everything new!

MO. Show us your books!

SVERD. [*Pointing to the portfolio*] I bring with me certified copies of our balances during the last few years. We are getting along—in a modest way, but we are getting along.

SEVERAL. In a modest way, yes.

SVERD. Yes, we are content with moderate profits—and perhaps that's the main difference between us and you gentlemen.

SEVERAL. Well, well!

A DELEGATE. Stick to your own business, please!

SVERD. And I can tell you another thing. All our workmen are members of Bratt's union, and they take Sang's paper. You bet they do! And neither the hills above us nor the falls beside us have had their complexions spoiled on that account. And now I have saved the worst to end with: we factory owners ourselves are members of Bratt's union and subscr——

A MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES. [*In a violent outburst*] Damn his cheek! What have you got to do here? Socialist! Anarchist! Get out! Shut up!

SVERD. I fear there are not quite so many men of brains present as I thought!

This calls forth laughter from some and protests from others.

MO. [*Shouting at the top of his voice*] Yes, that's like your impudence!

A DELEGATE. [*Also shouting*] How about your own head? Don't you belong to the Numskull family?

SVERD. If I do, I have a lot of relatives here. [*Laughter*] I think a great deal of that family and hope it thinks enough of me to let me criticise Mr. Holger's plan briefly. What I want to say first of all is that a union of factory owners covering the whole country—or the whole world even—is possible only if you get all the factory owners with you.

MO. Well, there'll be no trouble about that!

A DELEGATE. They'll be *made* to join us.

ANKER. No pressure!

SEVERAL. Yes, pressure is just the thing!

An outburst of talking follows.

SVERD. Mr. President!

HOLGER *makes no sign of hearing him.*

ANKER. [*Shouting*] But suppose the banks should stand by the others?

SEVERAL. They won't dare! We'd make them pay for it!

SVERD. But perhaps the retail dealers——?

MANY DELEGATES. Yes, let 'em try!

SVERD. It means we shall have to have two more unions: one of bankers and one of retail dealers.

MO. We'll boycott the bankers and undersell the dealers.

SVERD. There, now—that's another use for the defence fund! And then you'll have to fight the whole Liberal Party. Whereby the whole thing will be turned into politics.

MO. What else is it now?

SVERD. Mo, this is something entirely new! A union of factory owners that has a compulsory membership and uses force against the workmen, that boycotts the banks and goes to war with the retail dealers—this is a novelty, indeed!

ANKER. That will never succeed—not in all eternity!

MANY. [*Angrily*] It *shall* succeed!

SVERD. [*Quickly*] Grant that it succeeds! That it succeeds splendidly! You control the employers, the workmen, the market—which means that indirectly you control both local and national authorities. What will be the outcome? That sooner or later you gentlemen overreach yourselves—so much power being a direct temptation to that sort of thing—whereupon we'll have an uprising more fierce in its bitterness than any of the religious wars waged by our ancestors. Will that be progress, do you think? No, retrogression—that's what it means: a backsliding to savagery that will lead to the destruction of our machinery, the burning of our finished products, the killing of our foremen. We have already had a taste of it—for the fight is on at the outposts.

ANKER. That's true!

SVERD. And what kind of a war will it be? On whom do you think the burden of it will fall? On both sides! On the employers as well as on the workmen! It would be much more convenient for both sides to stay at home and merely send word to each other that, at a certain stroke of the clock, they would—on either side—set fire to all they had, and then take care that the flames spread to the whole city in which they lived, thus paralysing the country they should serve!

Against their own will, a number of delegates are moved to applause.

MO. Tell *that* to the workmen!

SVERD. Both sides have to be told that they are plunging headlong into what is impossible and unnatural. Back of it must lie some unreasoning racial instinct—something akin to what turns us toward the supernatural in our search for poetry and greatness. But I tell you, the day will come when man discovers that there is more of greatness and poetry in what is natural and possible—however insignificant it may seem at times—than in all the supernaturalism we have

ever had, from the oldest sun-myth down to the latest sermon preached about it. And if both parties to this conflict could only stick to plain reality, what do you think they would discover? That the enemy which they both fight has nothing in common with either of them. That he is thriving on their strife, because it places both of them more securely in his clutch. I am thinking of the capitalist.

A SHRILL TENOR VOICE. You'd better leave the capitalist alone!

SVERD. My dear sir—why in the world should I leave the capitalist alone? Especially as we all know that in a young country like ours almost everybody has to operate with borrowed money and would like very much to avoid doing so. But the capitalist——

SHRILL TENOR VOICE. Leave the capitalist alone!

SVERD. [*Imitating the voice of the interrupter*] Is he sacred, perhaps? [*Laughter.*

MO. I am quite of the same opinion. These endless, useless complaints against the capitalist——

SVERD. [*Taking the word out of* MO'S *mouth*] Complaints against the capitalist, you say?

SHRILL TENOR VOICE. Leave the capitalist alone!

[*Everybody roars with laughter.*

SVERD. Mr. President, won't you please stop these annoying interruptions?

When HOLGER *pays no attention to the request, the laughter is renewed and is mingled with applause.*

SVERD. This means that you refuse me freedom of speech. It means that neither the president nor the meeting will grant me freedom of speech. [*Cries of "Hear" and laughter*] This was just what I expected, and for that reason I brought with me a stenographer.

His words provoke a storm of protest.

ALL. That isn't allowed! The proceedings are secret! Nothing must be reported!

SVERD. Nothing but publicity will help where the right of debate is denied. [*At the top of his voice*] I brought a phonograph, too.

Putting his portfolio under his arm, he steps smilingly from the dais.

ALL. Mephisto! Charlatan! Just what we expected! And *you* talk of freedom!

HOLGER. [*In a voice that rises above the din*] Mr. Ketil has the floor.

This announcement is greeted with applause and cries of "Bravo."

KETIL. *Who has been standing in the rear of the hall, calls to* SVERD, *who is seen leaving with two men, one of whom carries a small box*] Are you going?

SVERD. [*Gayly*] Yes.

KETIL. But I was just going to reply to what you said.

SVERD. Oh, there are plenty left who will enjoy it.

He bows and goes out while the laughter provoked by his reply is still lasting.

KETIL. [*Mounting the dais*] We have just been told how dreadful it would be for us to do what the workmen have been doing right along.

SEVERAL. Hear, hear!

KETIL. We learned long ago that we had no right to take the initiative in our dealings with the workmen. But that we have just as little right to follow their lead, that's something new. [*Signs of merriment*] There is only one thing we can do: obey the workmen. Everything else is dangerous. Consequently: let's raise their wages—so they can spend a little more on drink. [*Laughter and cries of "Hear, hear"*] I need

hardly tell you that the workmen must share in the profits—especially when there are none to share. [*General merriment*] It follows, of course, that we must give them a voice in running the business—which, I am sure, will make the banks much more anxious to grant us credit. [*Merriment*] Just now, when the competition is more keen than ever, we are to surrender both profits and control—which will lead us to a fine end, I am sure! [*Wild applause*] What can property in private hands mean but slavery to all the rest? No, indeed—property for nobody, and poverty for all: that's the ideal! [*Tremendous outburst of approval*] Freedom cannot exist side by side with the power of money. Poverty and freedom: there's the ideal for you! [*Applause as before*] Mr. Anker, who is a God-fearing man, spoke most touchingly about the vices of wealth—that is, about the vices of those who are wealthy or hope to become so. And we heard of sloth, and prodigality, and luxury, and immorality, and lust of power, and brutal contempt for other people. These are the vices that generally go with wealth. How much better, then, are the vices of the workmen! For I suppose, if such a mean thought be at all permissible, that they have theirs as well. Filthiness, slovenliness, slavishness, envy, drunkenness, thievishness, brawling, and a murder now and then—nay, in these days, when anarchism is rampant among them, mass-murder. I can't say that I care very much for any of these vices, whether they belong to ourselves or to the other side. But if it be that each side must have its own, why speak only of those that go with wealth? Is it because the vices of the workmen are so much more repulsive? [*Laughter and applause*] Or can it really be the opinion of Mr. Anker—who is a God-fearing man—that these vices will be disposed of by letting the workmen share in the profits? Does he mean that profit-sharing is a cause of repentance—to them as well as to us? [*Strong ap-*

proval] To me that kind of rant—I hope you'll pardon the term!—to me it seems rather weak-minded. [*Laughter*] Like all the rant about morality we have to hear whenever we want to do anything worth while, anything really effective. As I see it, the main trouble lies just in our morality. [*Roars of laughter*] The danger of which we have heard so much here is just that we always are so dreadfully moral. [*Tumultuous applause and cries of "That's right"*] It prevents us from defending the existing order, the state, the country—all that we possess and want to pass on to our children—from defending it in such a manner that they are made to realise and remember that here is something NOT TO BE TAMPERED WITH. And until this is done, we'll never have peace.

As KETIL *steps down he is given an ovation. Before it is over, most of those present are on their feet, talking eagerly.*

HOLGER. [*When the hubbub quiets down a little*] Well, now—Mr. Anker wants to be heard again.

A DELEGATE. Oh, have we got to have more of Anker?

MANY. We don't want any more of Anker!

ANOTHER DELEGATE. We have had enough of that anchor! [*Laughter.*

THIRD DELEGATE. Let's try another.

FOURTH DELEGATE. No more anchoring! Question!

MANY. Question!

ANKER. [*Who in the mean time has ascended the dais*] No, I think you'll have to have another try at my anchor first. [*Laughter*] The other one seemed inclined to drag, I should say—although it went down with a big splash. [*Cries of "Well, well"; many delegates go out, talking more or less loudly as they leave*] The new time, the new order that is coming—whether we want it or not—means just that there shall be

neither great wealth nor great poverty. There is something half-way between those two, and that is what is coming. And as we get nearer to it by degrees, the vices characterising both wealth and poverty will drop away. This is what we ought to realise in time—and by doing so we'll avoid these incessant dreadful conflicts. A previous speaker remarked that there must be something the matter with us because we so rarely take hold in a proper way. He seemed to think that we were caught in something that is beyond our power. No matter what that something may be—I am sure it exists. To me our extravagant war budget, our enormous administrative expenses, our wasteful private living, are very serious symptoms: the life we live is beyond our power. But for this fact, anarchism would be impossible. The lack of responsibility, the utter lack of moral stamina, displayed by our men of means in their wasting of millions, as if there were nobody in the country but themselves and those serving their pleasures: that's also anarchism—not a whit less brutal—and a rebellion against the laws of God and man. It is like crying to all the rest: "You, too—do just what you please!"

KETIL. [*Rising*] Mr. President.

As HOLGER *is seen to note down his name, a ripple of pleasant anticipation passes through the assembly.*

ANKER. The same is true of literature—of that literature which appeals to the wealthy and well-to-do—to the so-called "educated" classes. When it shows the same spirit—when it preaches unrestrained individualism—when it tears down everything and urges the violation of law and good manners alike—then it is a form of anarchism as much as that which hurls dynamite to kill.

A DELEGATE. Mr. President, I think we are getting too far away from the question before us.

MANY. Order! Order!

SEVERAL. Question! Question!

A number of other delegates stream in from the side rooms and join in the cry of "Question."

ANKER. There is no one in the world who has the right to do what he pleases with his own.

A DELEGATE. You bet we have!

ANKER. Indeed, we have not! Above us there are both written and unwritten laws. And I fear that you will break both, and especially the unwritten ones, if you try to enforce the conditions prescribed for the workmen in Mr. Holger's plan.

SEVERAL. [*Talking simultaneously*] Oh, you can't frighten us! We are not at all scared!

ANKER. I find those conditions revolting—a breach against written as well as unwritten law. And I am sure there are many here who agree with me. [*He stops.*

HOLGER. [*Rising*] I think the time has come to find out.

GENERAL OUTCRY. Yes, yes!

All that have been in the side rooms come hurrying into the hall.

HOLGER. Will those who agree with Mr. Anker please signify that fact. [*Silence*] Will they please speak up, I mean.

[*Silence; then laughter.*

A DELEGATE. [*At last, in a timid voice*] I agree with Mr. Anker.

A roar of laughter greets his words.

HOLGER. One man—that's all!

The delegates yell and stamp on the floor.

ANKER. If that's so, I must apologise for taking up the time of the meeting.

He goes toward the door, followed by the one delegate who agreed with him.

A DELEGATE. Good luck!

ANKER. [*In the doorway*] That's more than I dare to wish you! [*He disappears.*

HOLGER. The question has been called for.

MANY. Yes, yes!

HOLGER. Then you don't want to hear Mr. Ketil first?

EVERYBODY. Oh, yes, yes! [*Applause.*

HOLGER. But there is one speaker before Mr. Ketil—Mr. Blom. [*Silence.*

BLOM *rises—a serious man, elegantly dressed in black. He has not taken any part whatsoever in the various demonstrations. But he has been seen from time to time trying to catch* HOLGER'S *attention, not succeeding until a few moments before* KETIL *demanded the floor.*

HOLGER. I suppose you are also in favour of the motion before us?

BLOM. I am.

HOLGER. Mr. Blom has the floor.

BLOM. [*Mounting the dais*] May I ask for a glass of water?

HOLGER. [*Looking around; many delegates do the same*] What has become of the servants?

Several delegates hurry to the side doors to look for servants.

MO. Here's one! [*He beckons, and a servant appears.*

BLOM. Bring me a glass of water—iced. [*The servant leaves*] Our country has already lost millions—millions. The annual profits of our factories are already swallowed up. And more than that.

A DELEGATE. And more than that.

BLOM. [*Politely*] And more than that. For this reason the light-hearted—not to say flippant—tone characterising these proceedings has offended me very much.

A DELEGATE. Very much.

BLOM. [*Politely*] Very much. We shall not weather the crisis just started—just started—without self-control and discipline.

A DELEGATE. And discipline.

BLOM. [*Politely*] And discipline. [*Laughter*] When we possess self-control and discipline, then, and only then, can we hope to have with us—on our side—that power——

The SERVANT *has in the mean time returned with a magnificent pitcher and an equally magnificent goblet on a tray; he pours water into the goblet and offers it to* BLOM.

BLOM. Which is the greatest of all—namely——

[*He takes the goblet and drinks.*

A DELEGATE. Namely——?

SECOND DELEGATE. The army.

THIRD DELEGATE. The king.

FOURTH DELEGATE. The voters.

FIFTH DELEGATE. The ladies. [*Laughter.*

SIXTH DELEGATE. The cash. [*More laughter.*

BLOM. [*Putting down the goblet*] I mean the Church.

SEVERAL. Aw—the Church!

BLOM. The Church. Only by self-control and discipline can we get the Church with us.

A DELEGATE. With us.

BLOM. [*Politely*] With us.

ANOTHER DELEGATE. [*Seated very far back*] What the devil do we want with the Church when it can't make the workmen behave?

SEVERAL. Hear, hear!

A THIRD DELEGATE. What have we got it for, anyhow?

BLOM. [*Unmoved*] The Church does not side with the workmen. We can see that—see that. But neither does the

Church side with us, because we lack the order and discipline we want to enforce on the workmen—on the workmen—and which we want the Church to help us enforce.

A DELEGATE. To help us enforce.

BLOM. [*Politely*] To help us enforce. I agree entirely with the proposed plan. But unless we obtain the support of the Church, the carrying out of it will be impossible to us.

A DELEGATE. Impossible to us.

BLOM. [*Politely*] Impossible to us. That's my opinion.

[*He steps down.*

HOLGER. Mr. Ketil has the floor.

General applause. Everybody pushes forward to hear better.

KETIL. [*Mounting the dais during the applause*] Well, well—it's *we*, then, that lack discipline! [*Laughter and cries of "Hear, hear"*] And the Church, poor thing, is standing there, not knowing what to do—not daring to help us because we lack order and discipline. [*Laughter and cries of "Hear, hear"*] So that's the reason why the Church has always been helping those that had the power? And we must suppose that all who ever held power have also had self-control and discipline! [*Signs of general satisfaction*] Let us then by all means get hold of the power, so that we, too, can be sure of the Church! [*A storm of approval follows*] And of the workmen also! When the French Government shot down ten thousand of them at Paris—including all the worst mischief-makers—there came peace for many years. A little blood-letting now and then has its uses. [*Laughter; cries of "Hear, hear"; talk among the delegates*] I understand they are soon going to have another one down there. [*Laughter*] I don't think anything of that kind is needed here. But it depends on ourselves. If we seize the power to-day and show that we mean to keep the social body in good health, even if it

takes a blood-letting to do so, then I think we may escape it—but not otherwise. [*Loud cries of "Hear"*] Somebody said here a while ago that we were to blame for the anarchism of the others—that we were anarchists ourselves—and that the anarchism on both sides was wrecking the national welfare. Perhaps. But if you consider what some fool of a millionaire, or—to mention a still worse fool—some son of a millionaire [*laughter*] wastes in the course of several years: what does it matter in comparison with what a strike can waste in a few weeks? Nay—if you turn to England, or, still more, to America—in a few days, when, as frequently happens, the striking workmen destroy machinery, burn millions' worth of property, bring every form of business to a standstill, and upset the markets all over the world? With that kind of human beasts—always lying in wait within the workmen, no matter how peaceful they may seem—we are to share the control of our business and the profits which guarantee that control. And having to deal with such people, we are supposed to hesitate about seizing the power and using it for the good of all! [*Loud applause*] Not only do I cast my own vote for every point of Mr. Holger's plan, but I demand that we adopt it unanimously.

He steps down in the midst of a tempestuous ovation, all except BLOM *rising to their feet.*

A DELEGATE. Let's carry it by acclamation!

EVERYBODY. Yes, yes! [*Applause.*

MO. Three cheers for Holger—our great leader! Hurrah!

All present join in, including BLOM, *who has now risen.*

ANKER. [*Appearing suddenly in the doorway with the man who followed him out*] Beg your pardon, Mr. President, but we can't get out.

HOLGER. Can't get out?

ANKER. All the doors are locked.

HOLGER. But the doorkeeper—eh?

ANKER. The doorkeeper isn't there.

HOLGER. What's that? What has become of the servants? Eh?

ANKER. We couldn't find any servants.

[*Signs of general anxiety.*

MO. But one of them was here a moment ago.

Several delegates rush to the doorways.

A DELEGATE. There he is now. [*He beckons.*

The SERVANT *enters.*

HOLGER. One of the extra servants. [*To the* SERVANT] See that these gentlemen get out. [*The* SERVANT *looks at his watch before he goes out with* ANKER *and the other delegates*] And try to find the doorkeeper. Eh?—You need not be disturbed, gentlemen. I have caused the doors to be locked in order to provide against intruders. The police are outside. And I suppose the servants are getting ready for the dinner.

SEVERAL. [*In tones of relief*] Oh, that's it!

HOLGER. This interruption has prevented me from expressing my gratitude as spontaneously as I could have wished—my gratitude for this splendid tribute—and also for the confidence you have shown me by the adoption of my plan. You may be sure that I shall not disappoint you. I thank you also for helping me to break up that constitutional debate into which we found ourselves plunged so unexpectedly. [*Laughter*] The tendency to play at parliament, in season and out, is one of the scourges of our time. Every idea is talked to death; every higher aim is dragged down. But I suppose that what has its origin in a choice exercised by mediocrity can hardly act otherwise. [*Cries of "Hear, hear"*] Please be seated, gentlemen [*A few sit down, a majority remain standing*] The action we have taken here now I regard as decisive. As I see it, it is a great

event and it has been the chief aim of my life. [*Cries of "Hear"*] Shortly before I had the honour of bidding you welcome, I had a conference with the workmen, at which I had once more to hear that they, and not we, have built the factories—that they are making the money we are living on. And we know, of course, that the same is true of the state: they have built it, and they are maintaining it. All we do is to live by their efforts.—But the truth is, that at no time or place have the efforts of scattered workers achieved anything like that. They have never been able to reach beyond their own needs—beyond the earning of bare necessities. Only the co-ordination of such efforts could achieve something more by uniting great numbers in the pursuit of a common goal. This work of co-ordination used to rest principally on the big landowners and the great guilds. Those were the men of power that built our societies. The warriors were partly a help and partly a hindrance. The same holds true of the priests—they sometimes helped and sometimes hindered. But we are the heirs both of the nobility and the guilds. In our own day we stand for this work of co-ordination. We are now the founders of great fortunes. It is by us that city and country alike are built up; it is through us the workmen gain a living; and from us springs that prosperity which finds something to spare for the arts and sciences. [*Tumultuous and prolonged enthusiasm*] As long as the greater part of the wealth remains controlled by *us*, so long will all that is born out of it continue to be rich in individuality, originality, and variety. Every one consults his own taste, and everybody finds it suited. But imagine in our place a single authority, be it that of community or state! Only one producer, only one purchaser, and, of course, only one taste. And also, of course, only one standard of value. That would be outright Hell! Then, all the year around,

this earthly life would be reduced to one long Sunday afternoon of boredom. [*Laughter*] In the end the nations would then grow so much alike that we could hardly tell whether we were living in this ant-heap or in that—except possibly by our manner of growling at each other. [*Laughter*] Although I suppose in the end that difference would be wiped out, too—eh? [*More laughter*] When they call out to us from the other side that the will of the majority must rule, and that *they* are the majority, then we reply: the insects are also in a majority. [*Cries of "Hear, hear"*] If such a majority should come into power here—by the ballot or any other means—a majority, that would mean, without the traditions of a ruling class, without its nobility of mind and passion for beauty, without its age-tested love of order in big things and small—then, quietly but firmly, we would give the word: "Guns to the fore!"

The entire gathering is on its feet in a moment, shouting, applauding, and crowding up about HOLGER.

HOLGER. And now, gentlemen, the banquet will begin! [*He turns around to push a button; as he does so, the first of three guns is fired outside, while at the same moment an orchestra begins to play a lively march composed especially for the occasion*] I'll take the liberty of leading the way.

He steps down from the throne and offers his arm to KETIL; *behind them the rest begin to fall in, two abreast.*

ANKER. [*Appears again with his companion midway between the two doors*] We cannot get out. [*Everybody stops to listen*] We are even unable now to get below this floor. We have tried both stairways.

HOLGER. Burst open the doors then!

ANKER. We could tell that the doors were fastened with heavy bars—on the outside.

HOLGER. [*Leaving* KETIL] What does this mean? Where is that servant?

ANKER. He disappeared.

The delegates begin to show apprehension.

MO. There he is now.

[*Pointing toward one of the side rooms.*

HOLGER. [*In a commanding voice*] Come here!

The SERVANT *approaches.*

SEVERAL. What does all this mean? What is it?

HOLGER. [*With a silencing gesture*] If you please! [*Takes the* SERVANT *by the arm and leads him down to the foreground*] Explain! What does all this mean?

MANY DELEGATES. [*Crowding around the man*] Yes, what does it mean?

SERVANT. Let go! [HOLGER *drops his hold*] You want to know what it means?

EVERYBODY. Yes!

The SERVANT *mounts the dais.*

SEVERAL. Well, he's going to make a speech!

SERVANT. You want to know what it means?

EVERYBODY. Yes!

SERVANT. We are locked in——

HOLGER. But the doorkeeper, the servants——?

SERVANT. They have left.

HOLGER. Of their own will? Or under compulsion?

SERVANT. Both. Those that wanted to go took care that the rest did. Now there is no one left.

[*Panic-stricken silence prevails.*

MANY. But the police? [*They begin to stir about uneasily*] The police! Call the police!

A couple of delegates lead the way and many follow them to the big windows, which are thrown open, several leaning out to look for the police.

A DELEGATE. No police are in sight!

SEVERAL. We can't see any. There are none outside!

MANY. What? Are we locked in?

[*They surge toward the windows.*

MO. [*Coming forward and shouting at the top of his voice*] Explain! There are no police there—not one outside!

The delegates crowd around the SERVANT *again.*

KETIL. Have you fixed the police too?

SERVANT. Yes, the police lines have been moved further off.

HOLGER. Was that done in my name?

SERVANT. It was.

DELEGATES. [*Packed together in the foreground*] That's a devilish trick! What's up? What's going to happen? We're betrayed! What can be done?

MO. [*Mounting a chair*] Keep quiet, everybody! [*To the* SERVANT] What's going to happen? [*All stop talking, with the result that the lively strain of the march is heard the better*] Can't anybody stop that foolish music?

SEVERAL. Stop the music!

EVERYBODY. Stop the music!

BLOM. [*Leans out of the window, shouting*] The music must stop! Stop it!

Everybody listens expectantly, but the music continues with undiminished vigour.

MO. [*Desperately*] Can't anybody make it stop?

HOLGER. You'll have to send somebody up to the roof—that's where the orchestra is.

KETIL. It has been done already.

New pause, during which the music goes on as before.

MO. It goes right on! For Heaven's sake, go, some of you!

Three or four delegates rush out.

SERVANT. [*To* BLOM, *who has come forward again*] And such poor music at that!

BLOM. No, I don't think so! I don't think so. But the whole thing is dreadful. [*The music stops.*

MO. At last!

SEVERAL. [*With evident relief*] That's better!

MO. [*To the* SERVANT] Will you tell us now: what does it mean? [*A breathless pause ensues.*

SERVANT. You have been summoned hence.

The same deep silence prevails again.

MO. [*After a long while, almost in a whisper*] By whom?

SERVANT. By Maren Haug—the woman we buried yesterday. She wants you to join her. [*Deep silence again.*

MO. [*All the time remaining on the chair*] What—what does that mean?

SERVANT. When this place was built, electric wires were laid from the rooms down to the old mining gallery that runs right beneath us. That gallery has been cleared, and during the last few nights it has been loaded.

[*Silence as before.*

HOLGER. [*Who so far hasn't made a movement*] Who's in charge of the job?

SERVANT. The man who laid the wires.

HOLGER. Is he here now?

SERVANT. No, he has more to do afterward.

MO. [*Bursting out*] Who are you?

SERVANT. What does it matter? I am not looking for immortality.

MO. Kill the fellow! [*Leaps from the chair.*

MANY. [*Trying to get at the* SERVANT] You scoundrel! Assassin!

HOLGER. [*Stepping in between*] No, no! Wait! Wait, I tell you! [*When comparative quiet has been restored*] I want to speak to this man alone. [*To the* SERVANT] Will you come down here and let me talk with you?

SERVANT. [*After a glance at his watch*] You'll have to be brief.

He steps down and goes to HOLGER; *both come further down the stage,* HOLGER *motioning those around them to withdraw.*

HOLGER. What do you want for letting us out? Go as high as you like. Ask any guarantee you choose. How do you want the money paid out?—You can leave here on a special steamer this very evening.—Why don't you answer?

SERVANT. [*Goes over to the throne and mounts the platform on which it stands*] Now I am master here! It's under my command you'll have to make this trip! And you'd better hold fast when it begins to roll.

General alarm and whispering among the delegates.

KETIL. A question to our master—if it so please him?

SERVANT. [*With his watch in his hand*] Yes—but quick.

KETIL. What's the good of all this?

SERVANT. Of the—ascension?

KETIL. Yes. What's the use of it?

SERVANT. Advertising.

SEVERAL. [*Repeating in whispers*] Advertising?

KETIL. I dare say this advertisement will cost *you* a lot more than us.

SERVANT. Oh, others will follow. It's the numbers that will do it. Like so many shining stars you're going to proclaim our cause! And I hope you appreciate the undeserved honour of your glorious ending!

HOLGER. And now's the time?

SERVANT. Now is the time. Most noble fellow stars—attention! [*He starts toward the rear.*

HOLGER. Well, *you'll* give no signal!

He pulls out a revolver and fires four shots in quick succession at the SERVANT.

SERVANT. [*As the shots ring out, takes a few steps backward, putting his hand first to his heart, and then to his abdomen; at last he clasps his head with both hands*] That's good!

He reels forward and falls at the feet of HOLGER, *who has been following him. All rush forward to have a look at the prostrate body. Some mount the speaker's dais, others climb up on the throne, while others get up on chairs to look over the heads of those in front of them.*

At that moment the MAN IN BROWN *appears suddenly beside the body.*

MAN IN BROWN. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

He crouches down and slaps his knees as he hops around like a bird; then he runs like a flash toward the right, while HOLGER *fires two shots after him.*

MO. [*In utter panic*] Are there others?

EVERYBODY. There are others! There are others! What will happen now? [*They run around aimlessly.*

MO. [*Who has been running toward the windows*] Ssh! Ssh!

A DELEGATE. What is it?

MO. Ssh, ssh! I think some one is calling outside——

He leans out of one of the windows, all of which are open.

MANY. [*Eagerly*] Is there anybody to help us?

[*They rush wildly toward the windows.*

MO. Ssh, I tell you! It's a woman. She's standing on the other side of the moat. Listen! Can't you see her?

A DELEGATE. She's signalling to us.

MO. Keep quiet now! [*Silence.*

A WOMAN'S VOICE. [*Though barely heard, its horror-stricken tone can be distinguished*] Come out of there! They have mined the ground under the Castle!

SERVANT. Rachel!

HOLGER. [*Still standing beside him, says in a low voice*] Is he alive?

SEVERAL. [*Calling out*] We can't get out!

MO. One at a time. [*Shouting*] We can't get out! Send somebody to open for us!

MANY. Send somebody to open for us!

Most of those that have remained behind hurry to the windows to get a look.

MO. Ssh! Keep quiet. [*Silence.*

WOMAN'S VOICE. Nobody can get there! The drawbridge is raised!

SERVANT. Rachel.

HOLGER. [*Who has remained immovable, says almost in a whisper*] Can he be her brother?

DELEGATES. [*Sweeping backward from the windows again and talking all together*] The drawbridge is raised! We're locked in and trapped! What can be done? Are there no ropes to slide down—no ladders?

A DELEGATE. [*Shouting above the din*] Are there no ropes we can slide down on to get hold of ladders?

HOLGER. I am afraid not. Everything is new here.

MO. Why in the world did you bring us here?

A DELEGATE. It's a murder-trap, that's what it is!

SEVERAL. You shouldn't have brought us here! It's your fault!

MANY. If anything happens to us, it's your fault!

MO. Your boundless vanity and arrogance are to blame for this!

ALMOST EVERYBODY. It's dreadful! It's up to you to get us out! You saw last year that the place was dangerous! We relied on you! Why don't you do something?

HOLGER. [*Calmly*] Gentlemen, try to be a little more calm! Bear in mind that the explosion cannot wreck the whole

castle. And bear in mind, too, that the man who was to give the signal is lying here.

At these words the SERVANT *makes an effort to raise himself.*

A DELEGATE. [*Shouts*] He's alive!

SEVERAL. Is he alive?

Again the crowd closes around the SERVANT, *who is barely able to raise his head.*

A DELEGATE. Ssh! He's trying to say something!

SERVANT. I—I am not alone. [*He sinks back again.*

ANOTHER DELEGATE. [*In a whisper*] Where are the others?

SEVERAL. [*In low tones*] Where are the others? Where do you think the explosion will take place?

A DELEGATE. Right here, of course!

OTHER DELEGATES. Yes, of course, right here!

MANY. Right here! Of course, it must be right here!

MO. [*Bursting into wild laughter*] Why didn't I think of that before? Ha-ha-ha-ha!

He runs to one of the windows and flings himself out before anybody has time to stop him.

SEVERAL. [*Run to the windows, but draw back in horror*] Killed! Smashed against the stone pavement!

They repeat this to others, who didn't hear at first.

OTHERS. Horrible! What's to become of us?

Another delegate wants to throw himself out of the window, and when the rest try to stop him a fight ensues.

HOLGER. [*In commanding tones*] Take care! Despair is contagious!

SEVERAL. [*To the rest*] Yes, it's contagious! You'd better take care!

HOLGER. Why don't you try to meet the inevitable with

dignity? All of us have to meet death once. And our death will do more for order in this country than any one of us could achieve in the longest of lifetimes. For you may be sure that the power will never pass into the hands of people who resort to such methods. Remember that! And let us die happy for that reason! Our death will fill our fellow citizens with just that resentment and courage which alone can save our country now. Long live our country!

ALL. Long live our country!

Quiet has barely returned, when the frightful laughter of the MAN IN BROWN *is heard from the right.*

A DELEGATE. Oh, it's *him*, of course!

[*Runs in the direction of the laughter.*

SEVERAL. Yes, it must be him. [*Run out.*

MANY. It's him! Catch him! [*Run out.*

ALL. It's him! Catch him! Kill him!

All except HOLGER, ANKER, *and* KETIL *rush out wildly,* BLOM *walking out after the rest.*

KETIL. [*To* HOLGER] They don't know what they are doing any longer.

HOLGER. [*Who has been following the wild rout with his eyes*] Yes, they are trying to run away from it—of course!

ANKER. [*Gently*] Friends, there is nothing left for us now but to trust in the mercy of God.

KETIL. Well, go ahead, old chap! As for me, I am an old sailor and have looked death in the eye before.

ANKER *kneels down at the left and begins to pray.*

HOLGER. [*Walks back and forth; as he passes the body of the* SERVANT *he says*] He's dead now, that fellow.

[*All three keep silent for a while.*

KETIL. There isn't any way out of this?

HOLGER. [*Absently and without stopping*] None at all.

KETIL. No, I thought so—not when a massive thing like this begins to go— Well, now I'll sit down here and not make another move—come what may!

ANKER. [*Turning his head toward* KETIL] But don't put on airs about it. Dear friend—why don't you come and pray for your soul instead?

KETIL. Not much use, I fear. I guess the soul is what it is. It can't change as quick as all that. And if anybody should be waiting for it on the other side—well, I imagine he won't let himself be fooled by what little I could say now.

The laughter of the MAN IN BROWN *is heard right above them, followed immediately by the cries and clatter of his pursuers.*

HOLGER. [*Stops and listens for a while; then he goes slowly up to* KETIL] And for the sake of that pack of cowards——!

KETIL. Yes, they are not much good.

HOLGER. I have known it all the time. But as long as they would take orders—eh?

KETIL. Yes—they were good for that—very good. But let them only get scared——

HOLGER. Then they run like dogs from a whipping. I can see that now.

KETIL. Yes, we need better stuff than that.

HOLGER. [*After a while*] I should have liked to live a little longer!

ANKER. [*Turning his face toward the other two*] Let us pray for our children! It'll be so hard on them to begin with. Let us pray that God may console them, and that there may not be so much evil in their time as there has been in ours. Let us pray for that!

The laughter is now heard from the left, not far off; then the yelling and shouting of the pursuing crowd, coming

nearer and nearer, until the whole pack bursts into the hall, crossing it from left to right. BLOM *walks after the rest.*

HOLGER. [*Who follows the crowd with his eyes as long as anybody remains in sight*] One mob or the other——

KETIL. No—strong men, that's what we need.

HOLGER. One will be enough. And he'll come!

ANKER. Hurry up now and pray with me—pray God to help the righteous so that they may bring light and peace to those who are suffering. God save our country! God——

A deep rumbling noise is heard; then wild human cries quickly cut off. KETIL, *with the chair on which he sits, is lifted from the floor and disappears.* HOLGER *falls and disappears also. Clouds of dust envelop everything in an obscuring mist.* ANKER *remains barely visible for a while longer—it looks as if he were passing right through the wall. But to the very last his voice can be heard.*

ANKER. God save our country! God save——

Curtain.

ACT IV

Under the trees of a big park. Wooden seats are built around some of the trunks. Faint strains of gently melancholy music are heard before the curtain rises and continue to be heard through the act—a distant chorus, as it were.

RACHEL *enters slowly, followed by* HALDEN. *During the ensuing scene* RACHEL *remains standing or walking around.* HALDEN *leans against a tree most of the time, but now and then he sits down for a few moments.*

RACHEL. Thank you! [*She looks around*] How fortunate it is that I have this park. Within doors the sorrow breaks me down—I have had a bad night. Out here I can stand up under it. These walks, with nothing but the sky above, and the spring weather—oh, it feels good!

HALDEN. There is consolation in nature.

RACHEL. [*Looking at him*] Yes, but nature does not try to rob us of our sorrow, as do human beings. It only lets us feel its own imperishable power, and reminds us of what lives on. [*Softly, as if to herself*] Lives on.

HALDEN. That's just the point at issue. Your sorrow must become absorbed in that which points ahead.

RACHEL. It's what my sorrow cannot do. And I don't want it to.—Please don't get impatient: don't you see that I am winning him back to myself through my sorrow? I couldn't keep up with him while he was alive—and so I let him get away from me that last evening because I didn't

understand him. He was a man of faith who preached no creed except that embodied in his own deeds. Faith is action. But one without faith finds it so hard to understand him who has it. And so I let him get away from me. It's something I can never forgive myself, something I shall never cease to regret. It stabs and claws at my flesh; it fills the air around me with sobs and screams. Sometimes I seem to share his agony where he lies buried in the ruins; at other times I am passing by his side through a hail-storm of curses poured upon him by hundreds of thousands ranged in endless rows. —And it is not *him* they hit. He knew in advance that very few could grasp what he was doing. It only made his mandate more compelling. In that way only could his action rise to sacrifice. So great was his pride toward his fellow men; so great his humility toward the cause he served. I feel certain that he scorned to explain himself even to those he had to lead into death. He was too modest to do so.— No lash or blow can reach to him—but me—to me they reach. How could I be so mistaken? How could my love for him so fail to sharpen my perception?

HALDEN. What is to become of you? You must resist.

RACHEL. What is to become of me? If I can sleep at night, my suffering begins anew in the morning, and if I *cannot* sleep—then I shall die. Nor can I weep! The tears are there—yet I cannot weep. But I like it better so, for thus I win him back to me again.

HALDEN. If he were alive, he would say: "Don't waste any sorrow on me, but give it to——"

RACHEL. [*Interrupting*] So he would! He was like that! I thank you for those words! As he lived, so he died—for others! But *I* can find no place for all those others. Although now the fate of those he died for is worse than ever, I can find no place for them—I have no place for any one but

him.—Oh, when I think of the man who lured him on to this.—It has been written that whoso shall offend one of the little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. But what of him who leads astray the yearning of another man for noble deeds—what should be done to him?

HALDEN. Oh, I suppose both of them meant to do good, to save somebody else by their deed——

RACHEL. [*Interrupting again*] The idea that anybody could be saved in such a way! By first being made cruel enough to desire other people's destruction! What are people to be saved from? Or if evil is to be suppressed by the sowing of still more evil, how can goodness get a chance to grow?

HALDEN. Suppose what has happened should arouse the conscience of the people?

RACHEL. Why, that's what he was saying—his very words, I think— Arouse the conscience of the people? After all these thousands of years that we have been subject to the influence of the family and of religion, can it be possible that we are unable to arouse people's conscience except by— O ye silent and exalted witnesses, who hear without answering and see without reflecting what you see, why don't you show me how to reach the upward road? For in the midst of all this misery there *is* no road that leads upward—nothing but an endless circling around the same spot, by which I perish!

HALDEN. Upward means forward.

RACHEL. But there is no forward in this! We have been thrown back into sheer barbarism! Once more all faith in a happy future has been wiped out. Just ask a few questions around here! The worst feature of such a mad outburst of evil is not the death of some or the sorrow of others: it is that all courage is frightened out of the world. Mercy has fled,

and all are crying for vengeance. Justice, kindness, forbearance, all our angels of light have fled away. The air is filled with fragments of mutilated corpses, and armed men are springing out of the ground. All others are in hiding—I can't dress a patient's wound without having to remember—I cannot hear a moan without getting sick at heart. And then the knowledge that no matter what I do, it won't help—it won't help!

HALDEN. No, it won't help! That's what tormented him.

RACHEL. And was that a reason for scattering his torment broadcast over all of us? For robbing everybody of what courage they had? Could it be possible to inflict a worse wound on mankind? What is death itself compared with a life without the courage to live it? When I look at that one man who was saved—when I see him in his chair, lame and wordless—he who possessed limitless courage—and when I see the workmen follow him around begging for mercy—those men who once thought they could crush him—! And then the sun, the spring—ever since that dreadful night—nothing but fine weather, night and day—a stretch of it the like of which I cannot recall. Is it not as if nature itself were crying out to us: "Shame! Shame! You sprinkle my leaves with blood, and mingle death-cries with my song. You darken the air for me with your gruesome complaints." That's what it is saying to us. "You are soiling the spring for me. Your diseases and your evil thoughts are crouching in the woods and on the greenswards. Everywhere a stink of misery is following you like that of rotting waters." That's what it is telling us. "Your greed and your envy are a pair of sisters who have fought each other since they were born"—that's what it says. "Only my highest mountain peaks, only my sandy wastes and icy deserts, have not seen those sisters; but every other part of the earth has been filled

by them with blood and brutal bawling. In the midst of eternal glory mankind has invented Hell and manages to keep it filled. And men, who should stand for perfection, harbour among them what is worthless and foul."—At last I have found a voice! Until now I have done nothing but listen, and help, and have kept silent, and fled from everything.—But I knew that out here my sorrow would find words.

HALDEN. It must be great indeed to make you so unjust.

RACHEL. But it is relief nevertheless—almost like crying.—But you are right: sorrow is an egoist. Others do not exist, or they are only in the way. I am abusing your kindness.

HALDEN. Don't talk like that!

RACHEL. But in those few words of yours there was something that—that— Oh, I hate those calculations on a large scale. They overlook what is human, although in this alone salvation lies. I fear whatever is inhuman.—Isn't it horrible to think of? With me Elias had already suffered all a man can stand of the inhumanity of the miracle. And on top of it he must needs fall victim to the inhumanity of theories—! Now I am coming to see how it happened. It is not enough to say that somebody made a wrong use of his passion for self-sacrifice. That would not be enough to explain such a choice on his part. No, something more was needed. They got hold of his worship for everything of supernatural dimensions. He was like his father: both had a childish fondness for that kind of thing. The dreams of idlers had in him become a religion. He could not perceive the salvation that lies in furnishing peace and light for the toil of the millions. He could see it only in great characters, in commanding wills, in monstrous happenings. That's why he gave away his big fortune as he did—to die the death of a Samson! That's why he did it all secretly, silently. That seemed to him the noblest way of all.—Yes, they must have

filled his imagination with the idea of something surpassing all that had been counted greatest before. Thus it was carried beyond what is human. There were no boundaries to be crossed in such a case. Some one must have observed how easily the passion for the superhuman can be led astray, and then made use of this fact. It was like handing a razor to a child with the words: "Put it in your mouth."

HALDEN. But it cannot possibly have happened like that.

RACHEL. I am not condemning anybody. What right has the sister of Elias Sang to condemn anybody? But tell me, Mr. Halden: when goodness uses dynamite, what is then to be called good, and what evil? The greatest thing about goodness is that it creates. Out of its own it adds joy, and perhaps strength as well, to other wills. But how can it take away life? What a horrible fate Elias had to meet: to fall into the hands of such a monster!—I was standing on the ramparts when that enormous structure blew up. I was standing beside Bratt. We were thrown to the ground, and when he got up again his reason was gone. If I hadn't had him to care for at once, the same thing would have happened to me. Do you think Elias could have done it if he had caught sight of us two standing there?—His face that last evening, as he was leaving me, was like a cry of distress! Now I understand why. Can you imagine anything more cruel than a power within ourselves that goads us on to that which our whole nature resists? How can happiness be possible on this earth until our reasoning faculties become so spontaneous that no one can use us like that?—Oh, the pain within me!—Oh, that I could weep myself free from it!—If he were here, that man who has done all this—if he could hear how I am crying out lest my sorrow choke me—do you think that through my wail he would hear the wailing of thousands of others?—But were he standing here—I shouldn't speak a

harsh word to him. All human beings live as if surrounded by a cloud of smoke. They do not see. We are brought up to be what we are.—Oh, I am not accusing anybody. But God, whom we are to understand better the further we proceed—there is something in the brightness of this day, in its everlasting wholesomeness and beauty, that tells me—God must be present in all that we suffer from what is unnatural, irrational, and inhuman. The more numerous and frequent and loud our complaints become, the more deeply will God make himself felt.—Thus, brother, you have also been of service in your death. Not as that man of dread made you believe—but by calling forth suffering and opening the gates of sorrow. No circumstance is wholly our own until touched by sorrow; no ideal until sorrow has breathed upon it; no insight until the eyes of sorrow have met ours. Our mind is like a room full of visitors until sorrow steps across the threshold, be it with harsh or gentle tread—then the room becomes our own; then we are left by ourselves!—O Elias, Elias, only now do I understand you as you deserved to be understood! From now on I shall never leave you again—nor that for which you died. Our sufferings shall purge it; our tears shall glimmer through it like flames and render it sacred to thousands.—My wishes outstrip my powers. My strength is gone. Once more I am thrust back into impotence. Even sorrow demands strength.

HALDEN. There they are bringing Holger.

RACHEL. [*Going toward the left to meet him*] Poor fellow, he has had his morning tour.

HALDEN *places himself at the left so that he cannot be seen by* HOLGER, *who is carried by servants in a comfortable and luxurious armchair. Other servants follow behind.* HOLGER'S *head is wrapped in bandages; his right hand is paralysed.*

RACHEL. [*Holding* HOLGER'S *left hand*] He wants to rest awhile here.

The SERVANTS *put down the chair.*

HOLGER. [*Who has tried to raise his right hand*] I am always forgetting that my right hand is useless. I wanted to make the servants——

RACHEL. [*After bending over him, to the* SERVANTS] Please step aside a little.

The SERVANTS *leave.*

HOLGER. [*In a low voice*] I have something to say to you.

RACHEL. What is it, dear friend?

HOLGER. When they had dug me out—and it was found that I was the only survivor, you asked—to be allowed to nurse me.

RACHEL. Yes.

HOLGER. And so—I couldn't help being brought here—and became your first patient in the house and the park I had just handed over to you.

RACHEL. [*On her knees beside him*] Does it trouble you, dear friend? Is it troubling you in any way?

HOLGER. No—but—I have been too ill to tell you——

RACHEL. What? [*Long silence.*

HOLGER. Has your brother's body been found?

RACHEL. Yes—dreadfully mangled——

HOLGER. Nothing to show, then—how he died——?

RACHEL. [*With sharpened attention*] Didn't he die in the same way as the rest?

HOLGER. He spoke to us—told us a signal would be sent to the galleries below—and then he was shot down——

RACHEL. [*Drawing back*] He was shot down——?

HOLGER. I didn't know him.

RACHEL. [*Rising with a quick movement*] You shot him?

HOLGER. I didn't know him. I wasn't aware—that he

was your brother. But I am afraid—had I known him—I should have shot him just the same.

RACHEL. [*In a whisper*] Oh, it's horrible, horrible!

HOLGER. He died splendidly.—Just after he had been hit he said: "That's good!"

RACHEL. Oh, how he must have been suffering——!

HOLGER. He heard your voice outside. And so he spoke your name— You called to us twice, and both times he spoke your name.

RACHEL. Elias, Elias——!

HOLGER. Are you going to cast me off?

RACHEL. [*Throwing herself on her knees beside him*] No, no! [*At that moment she bursts into tears*] Oh, now I can cry—now I can cry! And I say as he did: that's good! [*She is shaken by sobs; finally she rises to her feet again*] Elias, Elias, you kept your own pain hidden from me—but now you have relieved me of mine! [*She breaks into sobs again.*

HOLGER. Come—come and take me away.

The SERVANTS *hurry up to him and carry him out to the right, moving very slowly.*

HANS BRAA *and* ASPELUND *enter from the left and follow after* HOLGER. *They are seen exchanging a few words with each other while crossing the stage.*

RACHEL. [*Without noticing the workmen*] So he spoke my name! I don't understand—but since I learned that——

[*She begins to weep again; sits down.*

HALDEN *comes forward. For a moment he stands looking down at her. Then he kneels solemnly before her and raises both arms toward heaven until both his hands meet palm to palm.*

RACHEL *doesn't notice him at once; but when she does so she turns instinctively away.*

HALDEN. You were right.

RACHEL. [*Almost inaudibly*] In what——?

HALDEN. And I yield to you.

RACHEL. [*Still in a low voice*] What do you mean?

HALDEN. More than you think.

[*He rises to his feet and stands very erect.*

RACHEL *looks hard at him. Just then* BRATT'S *voice is heard and he becomes visible in the background.*

HALDEN *makes a deprecatory gesture with one hand and goes out to the left.*

BRATT. [*As if speaking to somebody walking beside him*] So-o!—Really, you think so?—Well, indeed!

RACHEL. [*Following* HALDEN *with her eyes*] There was something—But I can't make out the rest.—Oh, is that you, Bratt?

BRATT. [*Looking ill and speaking in a low, dragging voice*] Yes—and Mr. Lasalle. May I introduce: Miss Sang—Mr. Lasalle. [*He bows first to one side, then to the other.*

RACHEL. But you have introduced him to me so many times.

BRATT. Perhaps I have. But it wasn't you I had in mind. It was Mr. Holger, Junior. Was it not he that stood here a moment ago?

RACHEL. Holger, Junior?

BRATT. Yes, that fellow with the electric wires.

RACHEL. [*Leaping to her feet; in a whisper*] What are you saying——?

BRATT. [*Stepping back*] You frighten me.

RACHEL. Who was it that stood here, you say?

BRATT. That stood—that stood——?

RACHEL. That stood here—who was it?

BRATT. Well—? Yes, who was it? There are times when I can't——

RACHEL. [*Going closer, but speaking very gently*] Who was it that was standing here?

BRATT. Will you permit me to ask Mr. Lasalle?

RACHEL. Yes, do!

BRATT. [*Bowing slightly toward the right*] Pardon me, Mr. Lasalle, but who was it—who was it first started the work on the ruins?

RACHEL. Oh—I see! [*She sits down.*

BRATT. [*Nearer to her*] For now ruins are quite the fashion, I understand?

RACHEL. Are you still going up to the ruins of the Castle every day?

BRATT. Yes—it was there it disappeared, you see.

RACHEL. How are you to-day?

BRATT. Yes.—Oh, yes, thank you.—If it were not for this thing that disappeared—and that I can't find again. [*He stands staring, a little downward and a little to the left, with his left cheek resting in his left hand*] That thing I looked for so many years. And now I can't remember what it is. Isn't that awful?

RACHEL. [*Rises, caresses him gently, and straightens out his dress*] Now, my dear Bratt, you'll be all right here with me.

BRATT. Yes, I am all right.—If it were not for this thing I can't get hold of.

RACHEL. But I am sure Mr. Lasalle will help you.

BRATT. Mr. Lasalle says we have to search the ruins.

RACHEL. Yes, of course, it was there it disappeared.

BRATT. It was there it disappeared.

RACHEL. Well, go over there now.

BRATT. Yes.—If you care, Mr. Lasalle—? Oh!—Yes.—Good-bye! [*He goes out, seeming to listen to somebody beside him*] Do you think so? I assure you that I am looking all

the time, but I can't find it. And I had taken so much trouble with it——

The last words are heard from the outside, as he disappears to the left.

A SERVANT *appears following* BRATT.

RACHEL. [*To the* SERVANT] He mustn't be allowed to leave the place. [*The* SERVANT *goes out to the left*] I haven't the strength to divide myself. And I wouldn't if I could.—Come back to me, you thoughts of my grief! Come to me, my black doves, and close me in!—Elias!—I should have been to you what mother was to father. She had the courage and the consecration. I didn't have enough, and so you complained of me in your last moments. For to call me then, when life was leaving you, was like a call to all that then was passing out of your reach unfinished, to all that in which you had not succeeded—and you gave it my name! That's the reason why your eyes are pursuing me: I see them as they were when, with the breathing of that complaint, the light went out of them.—There you lay deserted by all, while your life was ebbing away, and my name on your lips was the last glimpse of the waning shore.—And I feel as if for me, too, life was passing out of sight, and I stood here utterly alone, calling to you.

She walks a few steps as if held by some vision; then she sits down.

The music, audible all the time, assumes now a brighter colour, more suited to what follows.

CREDO *and* SPERA *enter quickly. As they catch sight of* RACHEL, *they halt. Then they steal up to her slowly, one from either side of the tree at which she is sitting. And finally they kneel beside her, one on either side.*

RACHEL. You here? [*She draws them to her*] And I didn't even remember you existed! Thank you for coming—thank

you! [*She breaks into tears as she takes her arms away from them; they wait quietly*] Did you have permission to come?

CREDO *and* SPERA. Yes.

SPERA. [*Cautiously*] We came here to see uncle?

CREDO. [*In the same way*] And as we had come——

SPERA. Just now——

CREDO. He said that after this——

BOTH. We might stay here with you.

RACHEL. Did he say *that?*

SPERA *and* CREDO. Yes. He said that now he was going to build for us *here.*

RACHEL. Oh—this is the first glimpse of daylight!

SPERA. He said that everything should be arranged——

BOTH. As you want it.

RACHEL. [*Drawing them to her again*] My own friends!

[*Silence.*

SPERA. [*Cautiously, as before*] Oh, we haven't talked of anything but you these days.

CREDO. [*In the same way*] And of what we wanted to tell you—if we had a chance.

SPERA. For we were afraid that you couldn't stand talking to anybody——

CREDO. That you were suffering too much.

RACHEL. It has been hard. [*She cries again.*

CREDO *and* SPERA *wait with their arms folded about her.*

SPERA. [*Softly*] We know that we cannot be to you what *he* was. But we will try.

CREDO. [*In the same way*] We'll try to be just as you want us. We'll share with you everything that happens to us.

SPERA. That's what we used to do when father and mother lived.

CREDO. We'll discover so many new things together.

RACHEL. No, there is no longer any future for me!

BOTH. But you have us!

SPERA. You have *our* future!

RACHEL. *You* have the whole world before you.

SPERA. And how about you? You who are giving so many a share in the future?

CREDO. You are so kind to everybody.

SPERA. To everybody within reach.

RACHEL. Oh, I can't even see them. I have tried, but I can't bear it. And even if I could, what would be the use?

SPERA. Of making people well and happy?

CREDO. There is nothing finer on the earth!

SPERA. You should have heard father speak of it!

CREDO. Of conquering what he called "the racial pessimism."

RACHEL. [*Becoming attentive*] The racial pessimism?

CREDO. [*Cautiously*] Yes, that thing to which your brother succumbed.

RACHEL. [*To herself*] Racial pessimism.

SPERA. [*With the same care*] Which has grown to such an extent lately. It is awful to hear people talk now.

RACHEL. What a strange word! What did your father have to say about it?

CREDO. It was to him our worst misfortune—what we ought to fight against first of all.

SPERA. And it was to *that* fight he wanted us to devote our lives.

RACHEL. But how did he want you to fight it?

BOTH. By means of inventions.

SPERA. First of all, in that way.

CREDO. He began to teach us when we were little children.

SPERA. Credo knows just what is needed.

CREDO. Yes, I do. This is what I am working at every day.

RACHEL. But how can inventions——?

CREDO. Make men more content? By making it cheaper for them to live—and easier.

SPERA. So that a few square yards of ground will give food enough for a man.

RACHEL. Would that be possible?

CREDO. When our clothes can be made out of leaves and straw; when we can make silk without silkworms and wool without sheep; when our houses can be built for one-twentieth of what they cost now and heated for nothing—don't you think that will make a difference?

SPERA. And then the railroads, Credo!

CREDO. When we can bore through rock as cheaply as through ordinary soil; when we get rails made of cheaper material than iron; when we can get the iron out of the ore more easily than now; when we get a motive power costing next to nothing—then the railroads will be like streets, on which travel is free. Then it will be as if we had abolished distance.

SPERA. And the air-ships, Credo.

CREDO. Oh, you know all about that, Rachel—that we'll soon be able to sail the air as we are sailing the sea now?

SPERA. Credo will work it out, I tell you!

CREDO. Travelling must cost a trifle only and life must be made interesting.

SPERA. People must cease to go hungry, to live in cold and darkness and ugliness, to go around in nasty clothes. That comes first—afterward we can take up other things.

CREDO. Tell what you mean to do, Spera.

SPERA. No, you first!

CREDO. I'll start Young People's Leagues.

RACHEL. What——?

CREDO. Young People's Leagues—all over the country.

I'll get hold of the brightest, you know. I'll begin with the schools—for at school they must start learning how to live for each other. Each school will choose some one thing to work for, and then there will be other things for which several schools work in common. And there must also be something for which all the schools in the country work together. Do you see? And it won't end there. We'll do the same thing with the day-labourers, the skilled workmen, the sailors, the clerks, the university students—there must be something each group works for, and something else that all the groups work in common for. Isn't that right? There must be rivalry about it, and pride in what they get done. And, finally, there must be something that every organisation in the whole country helps with.—Now it's your turn, Spera.

SPERA. [*Timidly*] I want to learn how to speak in public. If I can, I shall try to tell the women that they, too, must have something to live for—from the time they begin going to school. For instance, two or three might join together in taking care of a smaller girl—and she would be *theirs*, don't you know?

RACHEL. Oh, let me kiss that sweet little mouth! [*Kisses* SPERA] The mere fact that such dreams exist—I suppose that's in itself a promise of never-ending renewal.

CREDO. All that we have to suffer now, what is it in comparison with what people used to suffer in the past?

SPERA. Yet they pushed ahead. And we are only just beginning now.

RACHEL. Oh, you darling!

CREDO. Do you know what father used to say? Think only, he would say, when all those are set free who are now employed in making war—when they begin to work with the rest. What new inventions we'll have then! And what prosperity!

SPERA. And then he said——

CREDO. [*Waving her aside*] And then he said, that even that was nothing compared with what would happen when all men took up their home on earth once more.

SPERA. Heaven is here! In all that we do, don't you know? That's where heaven is!

CREDO. And in the future, and in what we do for the future—there's heaven!

RACHEL. There is a longing in everybody——

CREDO. For something better! It proves that more happiness is in store for us here! Don't you think so?

RACHEL. When you talk like that, I can see *him!*

CREDO. Do you know—about us and father and mother——?

SPERA. We have, so to speak, to do the work they left behind.

RACHEL. You mean that I should be doing his—I, who——

CREDO. But, Rachel—just *because* you have suffered so terribly!

RACHEL. You think——?

SPERA. Oh, tell her about what came after the "iron age" of which the ancients used to talk.

CREDO. No, about Antichrist, rather!

SPERA. Well, that's the same.

CREDO. Men have always known that, when their discouragement and despair reached their utmost, then the renewal was at hand—then they got strength enough for it—only then!

SPERA. Every strong race has had a feeling of it.

CREDO. Their poetry has prophesied about it.

SPERA. [*Cautiously*] Soon you will come to feel it, too.

RACHEL. [*Rising*] I'll go to Holger at once, to thank him for this happiness!

CREDO *and* SPERA *rise also.*

CREDO. All three of us will go!

SPERA. [*Nestling close to* RACHEL *and speaking very tenderly*] All four of us will go!

RACHEL. [*Kissing her*] Thank you!—All four of us!—And do you know what we'll do besides?

CREDO. No.

SPERA. What?

RACHEL. We'll ask him to see the workmen.

BOTH. Yes, yes!

RACHEL. For some one must begin to forgive.

BOTH. [*Repeating in low tones*] Yes, some one must begin to forgive.

They go out together to the right.

The music, which has been hovering about them all the time, follows them like a greeting out of the future.

Curtain.

LABOREMUS

(LABOREMUS)

1901

PERSONS

Wisby
Lydia
Dr. Kann
Langfred
Borgny
A Bellboy

LABOREMUS
(LABOREMUS)

ACT I

A small but elegantly furnished sitting-room in a first-class German hotel. There is a door in the rear, and doors on both sides. At the left, well to the front, stands a sofa, on which lies a bridal dress carefully spread out. A bridal wreath, a veil, and a pair of lady's gloves appear on the table in front of the sofa; also a tall hat and a pair of men's gloves. A man's summer overcoat hangs over a chair further back in the room. There are chairs around the table. The morning is well advanced.

An elderly man enters from the right. Over his underclothing he wears a dressing-gown that hangs about him in rich folds. He looks around the room. When he discovers the dress on the sofa, he approaches it automatically and stands gazing at it. Then he begins to look around again as if he were missing something. At last he stops in front of the door at the left. Finding it ajar, he manages stealthily to peer through the room beyond. Then he throws the door wide open and disappears, but returns in the next moment to ring for an attendant. In a short while a knock is heard at the door in the rear.

WISBY. Come!

A BELLBOY *enters.*

WISBY. Did my wife go out?

BELLBOY. Yes, sir.

WISBY. Long ago?

BELLBOY. About an hour, I think.

WISBY dismisses him with a gesture, and the BELLBOY *leaves the room.*

Then WISBY *walks about for a while, stopping in front of the dress on the sofa again, and also taking another look into the room at the left. Finally he sits down on one of the chairs at the table and falls at once into deep thought.*

The door in the rear is opened from the outside and LYDIA *comes in, dressed in a very fashionable walking-suit and looking radiant. The door is closed behind her by somebody on the outside. On seeing* WISBY, *she stops for a moment but begins almost at once to move very, very softly toward him. He neither sees nor hears anything until she falls on her knees beside him.*

WISBY *wants to rise, but she holds him down.*

LYDIA. Good morning!

WISBY. [*Brightening up*] Good morning!—So you have already been out for a morning walk?

LYDIA. [*Tenderly*] The pleasantest I ever had.

WISBY. [*Kissing her*] How you smell of the fresh air! And how beautiful you are!—You have slept well?

LYDIA. I fell asleep the moment—the moment you left me. [*Rising to her feet*] And I slept until the clock struck nine. [*She takes off her hat and gloves and puts them on the table, where she also places her parasol; then she picks up the veil and the wreath as if to caress them; then she puts them back again and goes over to* WISBY, *who has been watching her every movement*] Perhaps you are wondering how I could go out alone?

WISBY. No.

LYDIA. I had to do it. Just that. I had to see if I could

recognise myself in this place, by the little lakes out there, in the park. And among the pretty houses in the suburb. Especially among those houses.

WISBY. If you could recognise yourself?

LYDIA. No, I didn't use the right word. I wanted to know how it felt when I appeared among them again as their equal.

WISBY. As their——

LYDIA. The last time I was here, I had to beg for their favour. I used to be scared as I passed them, thinking of my concert. At that time I was still nothing but an infant prodigy. We gave three recitals in this place.—And God help me if I failed to do my best. This dread that so often takes hold of me—I think that was the time when it first came into my life.

WISBY. Do you really think so?

LYDIA. Those suburban villas—those residences of the rich —and the old trees that are more dignified than the houses even—and those little lakes—all those things stood for what is firmly established. While I stood for all that is adrift. And I used to look at them humbly—and in fear. But to-day!—For two hours I have been walking around among them. For two hours I have spread myself. Passed by them on grand parade, so to speak. Greeted the company and received their greetings in return. [*Throwing herself at his feet*] Oh, how grateful I am to you!

WISBY. [*Stroking her hair with his hand*] My sweet one!

LYDIA. I have never felt sure what kind of a person I was. Never until this morning. I have always been kept busy asking about it. Just to myself.

WISBY. You, too?

LYDIA. What? [*Rising quickly*] Are other people like that also?

WISBY *nods*.

LYDIA. And I thought it was only myself— No, really!— To-day—well, to-day I know who I am. And to-day all the others know it, too. I could see that they knew it—the villas, and the tall old trees, and the lakes. While I was still far off, as soon as they caught the first glimpse of me, they got themselves ready and came forward to greet me.

WISBY. [*Smiling*] And the people?

LYDIA. I am not talking about the people. Oh, when I used to be sitting up there on the platform playing, and never had a chance to be alone—how I did suffer! That one thing —to be alone, to have something for myself, to do what I myself wanted—it seemed heaven to me. You talk of the people? Yes, if I could have taken a single one of them off into a corner, where nobody else could hear us— Those eyes: "Who is she? Where does she come from? What does she want of us?"—The moment I was free, I rushed away from them, and out into the suburb; out to the trees and the little lakes, for in them I had faith. They stared proudly at me, of course, and I had to keep at a distance. But all the same I could say to them: sometimes I want to be like you—to have everything as fixed and secure as you have it. That's just what I have now! [*Leaning over* WISBY] You, dearest, you didn't go around asking other people about me. You came straight from your big place to ask me: "Will you be my wife?" That's the way it should be. No one in the whole wide world except you and me ever guessed that such a thing could happen. That's the way it should be! That's what makes complete happiness.

WISBY. Thank you!

LYDIA. [*Turned away from him*] Can it be possible for anybody else to know what in the last instance brings two people together? Do we know it ourselves? Do we ever quite know why we are what we are? Can any one of us remember

what we were two years ago? When somebody comes and tells me what I did or said that far back, it makes me feel as if I were reading it in a book. I am no longer what I was two years ago—not to speak of five or ten years ago. The person I was then can very well be more of a stranger to me than you are now.

WISBY. You are absolutely right.

LYDIA. You feel that way, too?

WISBY *nods.*

LYDIA. Nobody can expect, then, that we should let ourselves be ruled by what was. After all, we are not mere continuations. Whatever new thing is added to us must change us, mustn't it?

WISBY. Of course.

LYDIA. That we two have found each other, that now we are one, brings with it so much that is new. And this comes in everywhere. In this way we become new persons and cannot help acting quite differently.

WISBY. Well, does anybody doubt that?

LYDIA. No, but let us also have the courage to live up to it. [*She kneels beside him*] Beginning with last night, only you and me—no one but you and me! [*Cautiously*] Let nothing old ever come between us.

WISBY. [*Feverishly*] Never! I have promised you! Never, I tell you!

LYDIA. Otherwise I wouldn't dare. The memories that you have put behind you—you shall be compensated!

WISBY. I am already. [LYDIA *rises*] Every word you say makes me so happy. [*He rises also.*

LYDIA. Of all men you are the noblest and least exacting. For that reason I can tell you what I want. When I woke up this morning—you know, I slept from the moment you left me without being awake once——

WISBY. Youth!—So you told me before.

LYDIA. I slept right up to nine o'clock. Then I jumped out of bed. I could barely take time to dress myself, so eager was I to get out into that bright, delicious air—to the suburb, the park, the lakes! I wanted to bask in the sun and to have a real good chat.

WISBY. A real good chat?

LYDIA. Not with people! No, with the houses, with—oh, I have already told you!—How I am longing for Paris, too! But there we'll go driving.

WISBY. We'll keep horses. I love horses.

LYDIA. They must be grey—and the liveries must be pale-grey—and then you must drive yourself. You look so handsome. And I'll sit beside you. You'll drive me around to all the places where I—and won't it make me happy, though! [*She leans very close to him; he takes hold of her hand and strokes it*] But we'll keep all outsiders at a distance.

WISBY. We will.

LYDIA. We'll only see them from our box at the opera, in the theatres, at the races.

WISBY. Yes, at the races.

LYDIA. But we must give a couple of receptions with music during the winter, mustn't we? And they must be swell. Just a couple of them. The rest of the time, all by ourselves.

WISBY. By ourselves—that's what I love.

LYDIA. [*Leading him back to his chair*] Don't think I'll take advantage of you. I know your taste so completely. I want to be a part of you in everything.

WISBY. [*Sitting down*] Dearest one!

LYDIA. [*Turned away from him*] Oh, there is something from home that pursues me! There was a barrel factory. The staves lay piled up outside—and then they were put to-

gether, with hoops to hold them. Oh, that feeling of being nothing but staves—of not being able to put oneself together!

WISBY. [*Rising*] Lydia—dear friend—you can rely on me.

LYDIA. [*Turning toward him*] What you have done for me is splendid. So is what you tell me now. But perhaps the most splendid thing of all is that you can accept all I have to give—all that I am eager to give to *you!* Most people couldn't do that. They can only accept a little at a time. But I want to throw myself open to you, body and soul.—As a child I used to play at hide-and-seek with myself in a dell in the woods. I used to imagine that the place was known only to me, and that I owned it—the sun and I. That dell I give to you.—No, sit down!—Yes, you must sit down again. I want you that way—there now—and me like this. [*She kneels down beside him*] I am the younger one. From me you shall draw the warmth of youth. In the midst of winter you shall have a table set for you as if it were summer. You have told me that you get tired of your own thoughts at times. That will never happen hereafter. For then I'll play to you. You love music, don't you?

WISBY. [*Wistfully*] I do love it.

LYDIA. A while ago I read about a rose-bush that was peeping through the window at one who lay sick. Of course, you are not sick, and I am certainly not a rose-bush. But you want everybody to keep at a certain distance—even those who wish you well. You shall have me just the way you want me. I know your nature.

WISBY. You are good—oh, how good you are!

LYDIA. You say that so wistfully—? [*Looking hard at him; then, in a frightened voice*] Are you not well?

WISBY. Only a little tired.

LYDIA. You didn't sleep well?

WISBY. No.

LYDIA. [*Rising*] Why?— Heavens, but you haven't— Is anything the matter with your heart?

WISBY. Dear—it's something entirely different.

LYDIA. Something that has happened? Last night? It cannot be possible. [*Suddenly*] You have had a letter——

WISBY. No, no! Nothing of that kind. At bottom there is nothing at all.

LYDIA. You who were so happy—last—when you left me.

WISBY. So I am now. You can be assured of that.

LYDIA. I shall feel still more assured when you have told me what it is.

WISBY. If only there was something. But there isn't.

LYDIA. You have come to think of—of what?

WISBY. Don't ask me any more, please.

LYDIA. Oh, now I know: you have had a dream.

WISBY *gazes at her a moment; then he nods.*

LYDIA. Such a very trying dream?

WISBY. Perhaps it wasn't a dream.

LYDIA. It wasn't— Oh, now you must tell me more.

WISBY. I won't tell anything—because there is nothing to tell. Don't speak of it—then it will be all done with.

LYDIA. I who felt so happy—and didn't notice that you were depressed!

WISBY. [*Rising*] I am not at all depressed, I can assure you. Haven't we said from the very first—and haven't we just repeated it—the past does not concern us? And it is *not* going to concern us.

LYDIA. So it was something out of the past? Like a visit——

WISBY. In a dream, or something like that. Yes. The foolish part of it is that it has robbed me of my sleep. But more than that it cannot do. I tell you—I tell you—ghosts have to be bullied. Back into the night with them!

For the day has come—a new day! I'll go in and dress, and then we'll eat and have a drive. It's such wonderful weather.

LYDIA. Yes, the weather is wonderful—but the shadow that has fallen upon you—now it's on me.

WISBY. Oh, Lydia—help me instead! It is as if you wanted to drag me down in a grave.

LYDIA. There you see! Do you stick so deeply in it? You have to ask for help to get out of it—and you expect me to take that lightly?

WISBY. Every added word about it——

He stops short and walks toward the back of the room; as he comes forward again, LYDIA *goes to meet him.*

LYDIA. Last night you were visited by your dead wife.

WISBY *stops horrified and speechless.*

LYDIA. [*Who is also deeply stirred*] In a dream—or——?

WISBY. I don't know.

LYDIA. What did she want of you—? What did she want of you?

WISBY. I had just returned from your room. I had barely got into bed. Then—I saw her standing there! [*Pause.*

LYDIA. Did she speak?

WISBY. [*Raising one of his hands*] Don't, don't!—I shouldn't have said anything at all.

LYDIA. Perhaps not. But you cannot stop now.

WISBY. No more can I go on.

LYDIA. Then I shall have to. She said something you dare not repeat.

WISBY. [*In despair*] All that has no place in the daylight. Let it stay where it belongs!

LYDIA. In your soul? In your silent hours?

WISBY. [*Energetically*] I'll push it away from me—like this! [*He makes a movement as if rubbing something out of one hand*

with the palm of the other; then he uses the first hand in the same way; this gesture he repeats several times, and each time he accompanies it with an energetic] Like this!

LYDIA. But you cannot push it away from me. After this I shall never be able to look at you without asking in my thoughts: What was it she said to him?

WISBY. This is not right. As long as you don't repeat such things they fade out—by degrees—a little every day—until at last there is nothing but a shadow left. But if you repeat them—— [*He checks himself, turns around, and walks away.*

LYDIA. [*Following him*] But if you repeat them?

WISBY. [*Facing her again*] Then we put life into them, don't you understand? And then they grow. I tell you, I tell you: sensible people don't give dreams and ghosts a chance to raise their heads— We'll leave this place to-night.

LYDIA. Are you sure that no one else will come along?

WISBY. Come along?

LYDIA. And sit between us—mix in our talk?

WISBY. But, Lydia——

LYDIA. For I am sure she will. I can see her behind you now.

WISBY *makes a deprecatory gesture.*

LYDIA. I shall always see her behind you. Don't come to me any more—for you are not alone when you come!

WISBY. But, Lydia, how——

LYDIA. She will drive me out of the house. Who could sleep where you are sleeping—with her watching you?

WISBY. But if I told you, what could——?

LYDIA. Then there would be two of us to face it. Then we would take each other by the hand and walk right up to it—no matter what it was or whence it came.

WISBY. [*After a moment's thought*] Well—[*Then abruptly*] No—I won't tell.

LYDIA. [*In a low voice*] It was about me, then?

WISBY *remains silent.* LYDIA'S *face grows hard.* WISBY *sees it, and they stand staring at each other.*

LYDIA. You had better go in and dress now.

WISBY *goes out to the right.*

For a little while LYDIA *stands without moving. Then her glance turns toward the left, where the bridal dress is lying. She goes over and throws it on the floor. Then she throws the veil and the gloves after the dress and tramples down the whole pile. At last she tears up the bridal wreath and scatters the pieces on top of the rest. This done, she throws herself on a chair, with her arms on the table and her head buried in her arms. Then she bursts into loud sobbing.*

WISBY, *who had left the door ajar on leaving, is suddenly seen standing in the middle of the room without any dressing-gown on.*

Curtain.

ACT II

A large and richly furnished sitting-room in a French hotel. There is a door in the back and another at the right, near the foreground. A grand piano stands at the right. Near it, but farther forward and away from the wall, is a chaise-longue. An antique cabinet of magnificent workmanship stands at the left. Nearer the foreground on the left are grouped a table, a sofa, and several chairs.

WISBY *enters with a card in his hand. He is followed by a* BELLBOY.

BELLBOY. Yes, sir.

WISBY. Is my wife up?

BELLBOY. I don't think so, sir. I'll find out.

WISBY. Never mind. Let the gentleman come in.

The BELLBOY *goes out and closes the door.*

WISBY *goes to the cabinet, within which a number of decanters and glasses become visible when he opens the door. He takes out one of the decanters, pours out and drinks two glasses of something in quick succession, and then closes the door again.*

The BELLBOY *opens the rear door. At that moment a hotel clerk passes rapidly along the corridor outside, from left to right, crying out: "Forty-two, forty-three, and forty-four." He is followed by a group of people in travelling clothes. One of these, a man, calls out after the clerk: "Not too far, please!" An elderly*

lady calls to him in the same way: "On the sunny side, please."

After all of these people have disappeared, DR. KANN *enters from the right with a large leather case under his arm.*

The BELLBOY *closes the door behind him.*

WISBY *meets him holding out his hand, which* DR. KANN *seizes. Neither of them speaks.* DR. KANN'S *glance rests steadily on* WISBY, *who evades it. At last* DR. KANN *puts down the leather case.*

WISBY. You come from Norway?

DR. KANN. By way of England.

WISBY. Won't you sit down? [*Both sit down.*

DR. KANN. [*Looking around*] You're splendidly fixed here. Have you been living here all the time?

Frequent pauses occur during the ensuing conversation.

WISBY. We travel during the summer.

DR. KANN. I heard you were in Switzerland——

WISBY. [*Leaning back in his chair, with his arms folded*] Is it long since you left Norway?

DR. KANN. About a week.

WISBY. I suppose it was real winter there?

DR. KANN. Real winter—and that makes the spring down here the more pleasant.

WISBY. How long are you going to be here?

DR. KANN. It depends. I am not here for my pleasure.

WISBY. [*Sharply*] I have been expecting you.

DR. KANN. He is young. And it is better to commit what follies you must while you are young.

WISBY. He has been gone for a month. But last night he returned. [*With a show of surprise*] You know it?

DR. KANN. I come from him now.

WISBY. You do?

DR. KANN. I have a room in this hotel, next door to his.

WISBY. Oh!

He rises, walks over to the door at the right, and makes sure it is locked.

DR. KANN. Is anybody in there?

WISBY. I don't think so. [*He sits down*] But those rooms belong to us.

DR. KANN. You have been giving some musicales, I have heard.

WISBY. Yes.

DR. KANN. Does she play as well as she used to?

WISBY. Better than ever. I tell you——

He checks himself as he bends forward; then he throws himself back in the chair, folds his arms as before, and sits staring in front of himself.

DR. KANN. That was the way they met, wasn't it?

WISBY. [*Not moving a muscle*] Right here.

DR. KANN. She played to him—his own *Rondo?*

WISBY. [*Turning his face toward* DR. KANN] You ought to have seen it. [*He resumes his previous position.*

DR. KANN. It wasn't long ago, was it? Only a couple of months?

WISBY. Just about—something like that. [*Turning his head toward* DR. KANN *again*] Are you going to take him home with you?

DR. KANN. I have no authority over him.

WISBY. You haven't—as his uncle and guardian?

DR. KANN. Even if I had, I wouldn't interfere.

WISBY. [*Jumping up*] You wouldn't interfere? You wouldn't interfere?

DR. KANN. Not so that he could notice it.

WISBY. Oh——! [*He seats himself.*

DR. KANN. But you, Wisby——?

WISBY. [*Falteringly*] What about me?

DR. KANN. Why don't *you* go home? After all, that would be the best solution.

WISBY leans forward with a quick movement and rests his hands on his knees as if about to say something; then he sits back as before.

DR. KANN. I went out to your place just before I left. [WISBY *makes no response*] When I showed myself, your dogs almost went crazy. I think it made them feel that you couldn't be far away, either. [WISBY *shows restlessness*] Don't you hear the pack at times—in full cry among the hills—through those wonderful woods of yours? That clean-cut bay of Diana's?

WISBY. How—how did the dogs look?

DR. KANN. Well, that was the worst! Or rather—it was the only thing I could find fault with. Diana had grown fat—she like the rest. And the horses were also too fat by far.

WISBY. [*With a burst of temper, as he rises*] Oh, that loafer, Ole—that arch-loafer! Haven't I told him? Haven't I written him, too? "Don't let the dogs get fat!" And I have written him besides, that the horses should be exercised every day. [*He rushes back and forth*] It's simply unbearable! I tell you—I tell you, there isn't one I can trust!

DR. KANN. But you mean to go home, don't you?

WISBY *does not reply.*

DR. KANN. You haven't asked what made me go out to your place.

WISBY. [*Stopping*] Was anybody sick?

DR. KANN. No, they're all right, every one.—But I thought that, as I was coming here, I ought to bring something with me for you——

WISBY. For me?

DR. KANN. [*Rising*] I went into your study—and this is

what I brought. [*He goes over to the leather case*] I had a nice case made for it. [*He picks up the case and sets it on end on the table after having released a support attached to the back*] Perhaps, I thought, it might give you pleasure to see her again.

WISBY. You don't mean to say it's——

DR. KANN. Yes, it is. It is she herself.

Opening the front of the case, he reveals the portrait of a woman. Only her head and shoulders appear, but life-size. She wears a high-necked black dress, with a broad collar of white lace. The portrait suggests strongly a Van Dyck.

WISBY. Amelia——!

He approaches it slowly, as if in fear, and kneels in front of it; rising again, he takes out his handkerchief and wipes the picture with great care, giving special attention to one side of it.

DR. KANN. I don't think there is any dust on it. But it needs varnishing.

WISBY. Yes.

He moves away from it slowly and breaks into tears as he sits down.

DR. KANN. And how about your daughter, Wisby?

WISBY. I have no daughter. [*He begins to cry again.*

DR. KANN. What kind of talk is that?

WISBY. She is so far away. And she doesn't answer my letters.

DR. KANN. So you have written to her?

WISBY. I have written again and again.

DR. KANN. Well, I know positively that she has written to you also.

WISBY. [*Surprised, in a low voice*] What are you saying?

DR. KANN. She has written repeatedly. And she says just what you do: that she never gets an answer.

WISBY. [*Rises with an instinctive glance toward the door at the right: he takes a few steps in that direction; then he turns around*] Will you—will you be absolutely frank with me?

DR. KANN. Of course I will.

WISBY. I find—I find it so hard to speak of it—but I have nobody to ask. And I don't want to write. [*He looks around before he goes on*] Who is—[*After another glance toward the door at the right he forces himself with difficulty to say*] Yes—who is she? [*When* DR. KANN *doesn't reply at once, he adds*] It scares me—it scares me to think that everybody may know it but me.

DR. KANN. That may very well be the case.

WISBY. [*With deep feeling and evident bitterness, while still speaking in a subdued tone*] To think of it, that nobody would tell me anything! Not even you!

DR. KANN. Did we have a chance? Did anybody have the slightest idea of what you were up to?

WISBY. Perhaps not. Perhaps not. And yet—that nobody should speak up! She had been staying with us, after all.

DR. KANN. Yes, she had. But when you left in that sudden way, all of us thought you had gone to bring home your daughter. You had caused the house to be disinfected, don't you know.—And then, instead, you bob up in Paris as a married man!

WISBY. Don't let's talk of it!—What are people saying?—Don't spare me: what are they saying?

DR. KANN. Suppose we sit down.

WISBY. All right, but—why?

DR. KANN. I have something to tell you; something that will take a little time. [*Both sit down.*

WISBY. [*Gets up again*] Wait a moment! [*He goes to the leather case and closes it; then he comes back and sits down once more*] Now!

DR. KANN. It happened several years ago, at one of our Norwegian health resorts. One day, about the middle of the season, there arrived a beautiful young lady, more fashionable than all the rest, and a famous pianist to boot.

WISBY. I see!

DR. KANN. In some strange way she had become paralysed.

WISBY. Who had become paralysed?

DR. KANN. She.—She could barely get her feet down on the floor. She had to be lifted and carried and wheeled around in an invalid's chair.

WISBY. Well, if I ever——!

DR. KANN. Wait a moment! You can easily imagine what a pleasure the gentlemen took in doing it for her.

WISBY. But—that's something she never told me!

DR. KANN. They carried her to and from the table, to the piano and away from it. They lifted her into the wheel-chair and out of it again. And for the privilege of wheeling her about—I won't say exactly that it came to fighting—although Norwegians are ready to fight for less than that—but all her power over them was needed to prevent it. She couldn't bear any kind of scandal. She was very virtuous—made a special point of it. She didn't show the slightest preference for anybody. So that everybody was in hopes, everybody was trying to win her favour by service. By and by the tension became too intense, and parties were formed for and against. Old men made fools of themselves; married couples were talking of divorce; other ladies fled from the place—until at last something happened.

WISBY. [*Who has been wiping the sweat from his brow*] Well?

DR. KANN. The youngest of the attendant physicians—who, besides, was the one who had lost his head most completely—had to give up his own room to a patient. In the mean time he was put in a room next to the lady in question—on the ground floor. Of course, he couldn't sleep. He lay awake listening—to hear if she should stir, if she should cough or sigh, if she—until, in the middle of the night, he heard her get out of bed and begin to walk around.

WISBY. She walked?

DR. KANN. Of course. Back and forth. During a whole hour. The night after that she began to dance. The woman was as chipper as a sparrow, and she simply had to get some exercise. The third night he didn't hear a thing—because she had left—he having given her a hint himself.

WISBY. Well, if I ever in all my living days——

DR. KANN. The fellow was so ashamed that he kept it entirely to himself. That is, until *you* married her, Wisby. Then he told.

WISBY *gets up and begins to walk back and forth.*

DR. KANN. That's pretty good, isn't it?

WISBY. [*Laughs in a strange fashion, then he comes back to* DR. KANN] Is there anything more? Of course, there must be more!

DR. KANN. There is that story about old man Stephansen.

WISBY. You mean Stephansen——?

DR. KANN. Exactly! The millionaire!

WISBY. Isn't he dead?

DR. KANN. Yes, he's dead now. But he lived quite a while, that fellow. She has an annuity that came from him.

WISBY. [*Attentive*] From him?—It's from him it comes? And she says—[*He stops and makes an evident effort not to speak; in the same way he forces himself to sit down again*] What was the matter with old Stephansen?

DR. KANN. The old chap was seventy, or more, when he became so enamoured of her that he followed her all over Europe. He stayed invariably at the same hotel she did. It lasted quite a while. He was determined to marry her. But his relations took a hand in it—as might be expected. They didn't want to lose all the money. So he had to give up. But the old man was never himself after that.

WISBY. [*After a while*] So that annuity comes from old Stephansen.—Is there still more?

DR. KANN. I have no way of knowing everything—but I read a few years ago about a young English officer—he shot himself at a hotel in Amsterdam. Outside the door of a woman artist, the report said. It created quite a sensation at the time. Every newspaper printed it.

WISBY. Why—that happened while my wife was still living. I think we read it together. Yes, I am sure.—Did that refer to her?

DR. KANN. No name was given—or it was not given in full, at least. But now I have every reason to believe that it was she.

WISBY. Outside! So it wasn't on the inside, after all?

DR. KANN. [*Looking at him with surprise*] But, Wisby——

WISBY. [*Rising*] Oh, leave me alone! [*He walks away.*

DR. KANN. [*Following him with his eyes*] That officer probably had no money.

WISBY. [*Stops abruptly, then with a movement toward* DR. KANN] Do you think it will ever do for me to go home?

DR. KANN. Alone? Yes. [*Rising*] Frankly speaking—do you want to go on with this?

WISBY. [*Turns from* DR. KANN *in great excitement, comes back, tries to say something, turns away again, and manages finally to say*] That time she was leaving us—it was in the winter, an ice-cold day without snow—my wife was lying

inside—she was much worse again—and there, on the outside—there she was getting into the carriage—she who had brought us music and hope. It was as if life itself was leaving us. I asked her to stay. But she wouldn't. That time——

DR. KANN. Pardon me for interrupting you. But she didn't leave of her own will.

WISBY. What are you saying?

DR. KANN. She didn't leave of her own will, I say.

WISBY. How—? You——?

DR. KANN. Yes, I—I drove her away.

WISBY. [*Frightened*] Why?

DR. KANN. She wanted to kill the woman that was inside.

WISBY. Kill her?

DR. KANN. Not with a dagger, or with poison. Not by choking her. But with her eyes and her will. She wanted to take the place of that woman.

WISBY. O Lord——!

DR. KANN. The sick woman could feel it. And that was enough!—What was it she couldn't feel, Wisby?

WISBY. What—did she feel?

DR. KANN. I can see that you have guessed it.

WISBY. As sure as there is a God above, I didn't understand at that time! As sure as there is a God above, I wasn't false to my poor wife—not by a word, not by as much as a gesture——

DR. KANN. No. It wasn't necessary, either. She could feel what you were thinking. That was enough. Without that the other one could never have triumphed.

WISBY *stares at* DR. KANN *until at last he sinks down on the chair beside which he has been standing.*

DR. KANN. No one has a right to say that she would have succumbed, no matter what happened. If I hadn't thought

that she could live, that she was on the way to recovery—do you think I would have left her? Or turned her over to my colleagues? Oh, no!—When I got back, the worst had happened. Then it was too late.

WISBY. [*Jumps up and begins to run about; suddenly he remembers the cabinet and rushes over to it; but, as he opens the door, he recalls that somebody else is present, and so he slams the door again, and rushes back to the chair, where he sinks down, overwhelmed*] Why didn't you tell me all that?

DR. KANN. I wanted to spare you, man! Can't you understand that?

WISBY. Spare me? If you had spoken, you would have spared me all this!

DR. KANN. It was such a desperate case that I couldn't but believe that you saw through it yourself.

WISBY. No, no, no!

DR. KANN. How, then, did you get on the track of it?

WISBY. [*Rising in a sort of ecstasy*] I tell you—I tell you—she came into my room, just as she used to come and go in her lifetime—wearing her black dress with the lace collar around the neck——

DR. KANN. [*In a whisper*] Amelia? Your dead——?

WISBY. The night of the wedding. I was sitting on my bed—or at least it seemed to me that I was wide-awake and sitting on my bed, when she came in and looked so sadly at me. And she said, "She from whom you have just come took my life!"

DR. KANN. [*As before*] She said that?

WISBY. And since—well, since then everything has been driving me to despair. I have not been able to think of anything else. [*He walks away, only to return at once*] But if I am her accomplice—well, then—then——

DR. KANN. This cannot go on!

WISBY. It must! Just on that account!

DR. KANN. There is one who can help in this matter.

WISBY. Me? Help me? Do you think I want to be helped? Do you think I can ever forgive myself?—There is a proverb that says: We reap as we have sown. But I tell you —I tell you—we reap because we have *not* sown! Weeds—that's what we reap! I have never done a thing in all my life. And that breeds unwholesome tendencies.

DR. KANN. [*Interrupting him*] This cannot go on! That's all there is to it!—There is one still living who has the power of pardon. She can bring it to you—day by day—in your own home.

WISBY. Borgny? I dare not look at her again! Not after to-day—not after what I have just learned——

DR. KANN. But *she* will dare. That's the main thing. She will take you into her arms—to bring that about was just the reason I took this with me.

[*He goes up to the case containing the portrait.*

WISBY. Yes, open it again! Just for a moment!

DR. KANN. [*Opens the case*] They resemble each other, mother and daughter, like two——

WISBY. [*With his eyes on the portrait, he doesn't hear* DR. KANN, *but speaks simultaneously*] Good heavens!—I say—I say: forgive me!

DR. KANN. Do you want to keep it, Wisby?

WISBY. [*Alarmed*] No, no! Take it along! [*He takes instinctively a few steps toward the door at the right; then in a low tone*] Why, it's open!—No, not now!—But it was!

DR. KANN. The door was open for quite a while.

WISBY. Is it possible? But when I looked——

DR. KANN. [*Standing by the portrait*] So you don't want to keep it?

WISBY. No! Take it along! It mustn't stay here!

DR. KANN. [*Closes the case quickly, takes it under his arms and picks up his hat*] Then I'll go. Good-bye!

WISBY. [*Has once more, quite mechanically, made for the door at the right; as he turns about, he sees that* DR. KANN *is gone, and that he has not closed the rear door on leaving; going to the rear door to close it, he discovers outside a woman dressed exactly like the portrait and looking very much like it; as he sees her standing in front of the open door, he reels backward and cries out with all his might*] Lydia! Oh, Lydia!

LYDIA *comes running from the right with her hair down, and dressed in an elegant, loosely draped morning gown. She sees what her husband is staring at. She and he stand close together. The woman on the outside, who seemed on the verge of entering, passes on.*

WISBY. This—this is the second time! Now there can be no mistake.

LYDIA. But what is it?

WISBY. [*Deeply shaken*] Doesn't your conscience tell you?

LYDIA. [*Recovering her self-control*] My conscience?—Oh, close that door, will you?

WISBY. It's more than I dare.

LYDIA. Well, I dare!

She goes rapidly toward the door, but when she is near it she stops and recoils; at that moment somebody closes the door from the outside.

WISBY. [*Approaching her*] What did you see?

LYDIA. Nothing.—It is nothing. Absolutely nothing. You are drunk, of course!

WISBY. What am I——?

LYDIA. This is Dr. Kann's doing!

WISBY. Dr. Kann's? But, Lydia——

LYDIA. I heard every word you two said to each other.

WISBY. Oh, you did?

LYDIA. You have betrayed me! You have deceived me! You who said that we were to start life all over again! Nothing of what had been should continue to exist. Neither for you nor for me. That's what you promised. And you broke your promise the very first day! You have been breaking it ever since! All the time since then!—Haven't you tortured me enough yet?

WISBY. But, Lydia——

LYDIA. [*Stamping her foot*] Haven't you said everything yet? Are you not done yet?

WISBY. [*With dignity*] I'll go. But I tell you—I tell you—— [*He goes out through the door in the rear.*

LYDIA. [*As she follows him toward the door*] I tell you—I tell you—that you are a scoundrel! You two have been lying shamefully about me! Oh, shamefully, shamefully!

In his excitement WISBY *forgets the door, which is left open as he disappears. A moment later somebody is heard humming a melody outside, and a light-haired young man becomes visible in the doorway.*

LANGFRED. Oh, here you are.

He enters and closes the door behind him; then he walks slowly toward LYDIA, *as if anticipating some great pleasure.*

LYDIA, *who had stopped to listen at the first sound of the hummed melody, now puts both her hands up to her heart; in that way she remains, without turning about.*

LANGFRED. [*Stepping up behind her and whispering into her ear*] Thanks for last night!

He puts his arms through hers with a stealthy, gliding motion.

LYDIA *turns around quickly and leans her head against his shoulder.*

LANGFRED. Lydia!

LYDIA *breaks into tears.*

LANGFRED. Has anything happened?

LYDIA. Don't abandon me, Langfred! Hide me!

LANGFRED. What is it, dear?

LYDIA *does not reply, but the convulsive shaking of her body shows that she is still crying.*

LANGFRED. Any unpleasantness on my account? [*She doesn't answer*] Has anybody been saying anything to you?

LYDIA *shakes her head.*

LANGFRED. Do you know that my uncle is here?

LYDIA. [*Vehemently*] Nobody must part us, Langfred!

LANGFRED. [*Quickly*] Has *he* said anything? [*She doesn't answer*] Has he been speaking to you?

LYDIA *shakes her head.*

LANGFRED. We had a long talk about you to-day—uncle and I.

LYDIA. [*Raises her head with a rapid movement, as she partly frees herself from his hold; looks hard at him*] What did he have to say?

LANGFRED. He knew you. I wasn't aware of that.

LYDIA. What did he have to say?

LANGFRED. Nothing that wasn't good.

LYDIA. [*After a moment's thought*] Oh, but he is clever!

LANGFRED. Why do you say that?

LYDIA. Because you are not clever. Oh, don't let him part us, Langfred!

LANGFRED. Uncle? How could you imagine anything of the kind?

LYDIA. Nobody in the world can be to you what I am—you have said it yourself. Do so again! Tell me again!

LANGFRED. Nobody in the world!

LYDIA. For nobody loves you as I do. Nobody can love

you as I do. And nobody understands your music and yourself as I do. You have said it. Isn't that so? You have said it!

LANGFRED. [*Kissing her passionately*] Is *this* answer enough——?

LYDIA. Never enough!—Oh, as I now wind myself about you, so I want to be a part of all your thoughts. Where our work is, there is also our love. So you have told me. Do you remember? You said it was true of all normal people. The same instinct that makes us choose our work makes us also choose our wives—that's what you told me!

LANGFRED. Perhaps I did.

LYDIA. You did, you did! Nothing ever made me more proud.—I, who was in love with your *Rondo* long before I saw you—wasn't that a sign? And I was playing it when you came in. For the first time—unexpectedly. It must mean something. Things must have been prepared for us two. What do you say?

LANGFRED. Nobody has ever played my *Rondo* as you did that time.

LYDIA. That, too! It couldn't be a mere accident, could it?

LANGFRED. I don't know about that. But I do know that since then we two have not been able to keep away from each other.

LYDIA. [*Eagerly*] That, too! That, too! And that your *Rondo* grew into a whole opera——

LANGFRED. Oh, no, that had happened before.

LYDIA. Oh——!

LANGFRED. Don't you remember? It was the first thing we talked of. The *Rondo* as basis for an opera—in order to find expression for the tremendous longing toward nature that lay back of the story.

LYDIA. Yes, perhaps. [*Coaxingly*] And now it's the opera we are to live for?

LANGFRED. [*With feeling*] Of course!

LYDIA. Let nobody part us then.

LANGFRED. [*Looking at her with surprise*] What do you mean?

LYDIA. There is danger ahead. I know it positively. That is, I can feel it. I always feel such things in advance.—Let us go away from here, Langfred!

LANGFRED. Now?

LYDIA. This very evening. I don't know—but I have a feeling that we must. Oh, I beg you—let us get away from here!

LANGFRED. But I shall have to tell uncle.

LYDIA. No, no, no! It is he, don't you know!

LANGFRED. Who wants to part us?

LYDIA. That's just why he has come here.

LANGFRED. Uncle?

LYDIA. My feeling warns me of all such things. I am so sure——

LANGFRED. But he has told me the very opposite—on my honour!

LYDIA. What has he told you?

LANGFRED. That he understood perfectly how we two must be fond of each other.

LYDIA. That's rather ambiguous, Langfred.

LANGFRED. Uncle is frankness and truthfulness personified.

LYDIA. Have I said anything to the contrary?

LANGFRED. He is my best friend. Has been ever since my father's death. He tells me everything—without the least reserve.

LYDIA. I don't doubt it.

LANGFRED. Oh, can't we have a little music? I am thirsty

for music. That's why I came. Why, I haven't heard you play yet!

LYDIA. I have to be in the mood to do so.

LANGFRED. And you are not—? That's too bad!

LYDIA. The first time I am to play for you again— Oh, you must understand—I must be feeling just right——

LANGFRED. Let us talk music, then! Please! This whole month I haven't had a soul—let's sit down! It's a fact, we haven't yet had a real talk together. For last night——

LYDIA. Now, now!

LANGFRED. I won't say anything about last night. It was too splendid to be talked of.

LYDIA. We'll sit down, then!

LANGFRED. The way we are used to! You over there. [*He points to the chaise-longue*] And I beside you.

LYDIA *lets herself be led to the chaise-longue.*

LANGFRED. Oh, it seems so long ago! [*He makes her lie down; she chooses her own position, with one arm supporting her head, and the other one resting along her body; he changes the position of her legs slightly, and then steps back to look at her*] Like a wave! Once I saw a wave on a picture. A single wave. It was coming straight at us——

LYDIA. [*Smiling*] As if to bury us?

LANGFRED. Yes, to draw us into itself!

LYDIA. Undine! Always Undine!

LANGFRED. [*Taking a chair*] What else do you expect me to be thinking of? [*He sits down.*

LYDIA. I had a strange experience while you were away.

LANGFRED. A strange experience?

LYDIA. Perhaps that isn't the word for it. Let us call it—a vision.

LANGFRED. What have you got to do with visions?

LYDIA. [*Smiling*] So that isn't right, either? Well, I'll tell

it just as it was. I saw snow-crystals in the sunshine on a perfectly clear day.

LANGFRED. It snowed on a perfectly clear day?

LYDIA. Not snow—snow-crystals, I said—the loveliest snow-crystals. The air was full of them——

LANGFRED. [*Fascinated*] On a perfectly clear day?

LYDIA. On a perfectly clear day! I have never seen anything so radiantly pure. They glittered in the air, in the sunlight, by millions, and sank downward without a sound.

LANGFRED. How could *that* be turned into music? For it suggests music, doesn't it?

LYDIA. Can you guess what I made out of it?

LANGFRED. Oh—a seraphic chorus—distant, invisible?

LYDIA. No! Something much nearer—nearer to us. It made me think of you and me.

LANGFRED. What?

LYDIA. If you could have your wish, then I should be divided into atoms that pervaded your music. I should glimmer through it like those snow-crystals, refining it—do you understand?

LANGFRED. I'll be hanged if I do!

LYDIA. [*Sitting up*] You love me only in your music.

LANGFRED. Immaterially?

LYDIA. Well, well—! Nowadays I have to be Undine. You see in me nothing but your Undine.

LANGFRED. Well, if that were so?

LYDIA. [*Eagerly*] If that were so? It does not satisfy me. I love *you!*

LANGFRED. I can't see the difference.

LYDIA. You cannot? [*She lies down again*] Well, if that——

LANGFRED. Perhaps you think—you love me apart from my music?

LYDIA. Yes! Yes, I tell you!

LANGFRED. Without it, you wouldn't even know me. It would change me so completely.

LYDIA. But I want to be something more to you than your Undine! You scare me.

LANGFRED. Is that so? What do you think Undine means to me?

LYDIA. An operatic libretto! A lot of themes! An inspiring subject! It may be inexhaustible, perhaps—but you and I are not in it.

LANGFRED. Yes, as surely as both our natures are in it. Don't you see? It was our natures that made the choice—the choice of just this thing. Later, perhaps, we may choose something else, and meet in that. Perhaps! But now we are here! This is the way our natures are to find expression. This is the way they are to expand. That much is certain—isn't it?

LYDIA. [*In a whisper*] Perhaps—partly.

LANGFRED. What is Undine but the sea itself? A poem of the sea. The sea that strives to climb the shore—the restlessness that surrounds what is fixed. Don't forget that the sea also mirrors the sky; don't forget that! It mirrors the sky, too. What longing, don't you see! How it must—how wistfully the sea must be gazing into that infinity! Isn't that so? What yearning! It cannot move the land; it cannot reach the heaven above.

LYDIA. [*Whispering*] No.

LANGFRED. But that's the music, dear! The music that circles life as the sea circles the land. And that which ventures away from it—the continuation of it, so to speak—which cannot be held back—which cannot be overtaken—but which can never come to rest, either——

LYDIA. [*Whispering*] Undine.

LANGFRED. Undine that is reaching out her hands toward

the sky for more—that mirrors the sky without possessing it—and so must away—away from all that is fixed and unattainable—at once clinging to it and flying from it—don't you see?—at once craving it and recoiling from it.

LYDIA, *who has raised herself into a sitting position, trembles and tries to pull* LANGFRED *down beside her.*

LANGFRED. [*Rising*] Always on the border-line—between what's known and unknown. The music goes further than it is aware of. When everything has been said, then the music goes on. But it comes to an end in what even the music cannot express.

LYDIA. [*Who has also risen*] Langfred!

LANGFRED. It solves and sets riddles. With its eyes full of the sky, it turns back into itself and sobs.—Oh, there are moments so dreadful that I could leap backward from everything—I too—like the wave—crushed into spray. For it's beyond reach—beyond my reach!

LYDIA *presses close to him.*

LANGFRED. [*Controlling himself*] No, don't cry! For this concerns me—not you!

LYDIA. Both of us!

LANGFRED. Don't cry! I wanted you only to understand that it means a great deal when I call you Undine.

LYDIA. I feel such dread. Rid me of it! Lift me up to yourself. Let me come with you. Hide me within yourself.

LANGFRED. I shall never abandon you.

LYDIA. [*Passionately*] Oh, Langfred—that name was given you for my sake—it means the "long peace" that you are to bring me. [*She presses still closer to him.*

LANGFRED. [*His voice becoming more intimate as he looks straight into her eyes*] Don't you think I understand——?

LYDIA. Ever since I was sixteen—no, even before that—I

had to sit there on the platform, playing, playing—and thinking. If only one would come who took me and carried me off! To some sheltered spot! So that nobody could see me, and I saw nobody! That's what I was thinking while I sat there and played. But no one came.

LANGFRED. Lydia!

LYDIA. Of course, there came—but not the one who could carry me off—not you!

LANGFRED. Undine—how you have been bored—haven't you?

LYDIA. Oh——!

LANGFRED. [*With still greater intimacy*] And you've been up to a lot of crazy mischief—haven't you? Out of sheer boredom—haven't you?

LYDIA. [*Quickly freeing herself*] What do you know? What have you heard?

LANGFRED. Not a thing. I just guess it.

LYDIA. You guess it?

LANGFRED. One doesn't play as you do without having had——

LYDIA. Some passionate longings, Langfred!

LANGFRED. [*As before*] More than longings!—How about it?—The first time I heard you, I thought—do you know what I thought?

LYDIA *makes no reply.*

LANGFRED. "That woman has dived pretty deep! That forceful grip on the most secret things has not come to her for nothing. She has been down in the undertow herself, she has. On her way to the bottom.—Heart cries!"

LYDIA. Oh——!

LANGFRED. "But she has pulled herself up again. What a power there is in her!"

LYDIA. That came when I saw you!

LANGFRED. No—you didn't see me.

LYDIA. I saw you the moment you came in. Do you think I could be mistaken about such a thing?

LANGFRED. You didn't see me. That's absolutely sure. You didn't look up at all. I stood there waiting for you to do so.

LYDIA. Then I felt your presence. When I am playing I am aware of everything.

LANGFRED. That may be.

LYDIA. Oh, Langfred! After all, it came about just as I had dreamt it. I sat and played, and then you came. Came and took me and carried me off! To a sheltered spot. [*Leaning up against him*] Now I understand why it couldn't have happened before. You are younger than I, of course.—That, too, fills me with such dread at times.

LANGFRED. Of us two, you are the younger, the stronger, the wilder! [LYDIA *throws her arms around his neck with a little cry.*] Isn't it true, perhaps?

LYDIA. [*In a whisper*] It is love that does that, Langfred!

LANGFRED. So *that's* what does it?

LYDIA. It adds to our stature. There is nothing we want when we love but to add to our own selves.

LANGFRED. How wise you are to-day!

LYDIA. Of course, you couldn't love anybody but one who brings you music—ever more music?

LANGFRED. No.

LYDIA. Do you see? She must *be* music, the woman you love.

LANGFRED. So she must. But she can be that without knowing how to play.

LYDIA. She can be music without——?

LANGFRED. Yes, she can.

LYDIA. Do you really think so?

LANGFRED. I know it.

LYDIA. Have you met anybody who——?

LANGFRED. I have. Oh, several!

LYDIA. Who brought you music—without knowing how to make music?

LANGFRED. Indeed! Listen—if you were only in the mood!

LYDIA. To play?

LANGFRED. Yes—oh, play a little!

LYDIA. Just when you are telling me that the ability to play is nothing?

LANGFRED. That's not what I said— But couldn't we possibly talk of something else than ourselves?

LYDIA. Certainly!

LANGFRED. Well, forgive me, but I am tortured by something I didn't get a chance to tell you yesterday. I didn't want to let it disturb us. Not the first time.

LYDIA. [*Apprehensively*] What do you mean?

LANGFRED. I haven't been working. I can't work any more.

LYDIA. [*Frightened*] You can't work?

LANGFRED. No, I can't!

LYDIA. You? You, who are richer than all the rest together?

LANGFRED. [*With intensity*] Don't say that kind of thing to me!—Forgive me!—The last time we were together, I got so many new ideas. That's true. I have never been richer than I was then. But I couldn't do anything with them. I could never find the quiet I needed for it.

LYDIA. But you went away to get quiet?

LANGFRED. And didn't find it. I can't work any more—Perhaps the subject, too, is somewhat to blame. It doesn't seem real to me. And then it's so monotonous. Only that longing, that continuous longing——

LYDIA. For a soul, Langfred! For a higher life.

LANGFRED. Of course. But it brings you all the time back to that same endless heaving—as in Wagner. It isn't my line.

LYDIA. Nobody, *nobody* can vary a theme as you can.

LANGFRED. [*Desperately*] Don't look at me like that!—You shall have the whole truth: When I am away from you, everything turns to longing for you—and when I am with you——

LYDIA. [*Interrupting him quickly*] Let's sit down at the piano!

LANGFRED. Yes, let us— That is, if I dare——?

LYDIA. Dare? Wasn't that what you wanted?

LANGFRED. Well, you see—[*Putting his hand into one of his pockets*] I have brought something.

LYDIA. [*Running to the piano*] And you didn't tell me at once!

LANGFRED. I don't feel sure of myself. I don't think it's——

LYDIA. [*Opening the piano*] Come now! [*She strikes a few chords containing the primary theme of "Undine"*] Do you remember?

LANGFRED. [*Interrupting her in a firm tone*] No! I won't! It isn't on a level with that.

[*He puts the manuscript back into his pocket.*

LYDIA. [*Gets up, goes to him, and says tenderly*] Langfred!

LANGFRED. You don't know what a hard time I have had.

LYDIA. And you didn't write me? If you had, I would have come to you.

LANGFRED. I didn't want to admit it, you know.—Besides, I didn't feel quite sure of it myself.

LYDIA. I am thankful that you turned to me at last. In spite of all! And you shall not be disappointed!—I shall build up a vast, vast stillness about you—as if you were living in a forest—in a deep forest, Langfred.

LANGFRED. [*Growing attentive*] What do you mean by that?

LYDIA. The problem is to find solitude; to get away from everything on the outside.

LANGFRED. Exactly!

LYDIA. The last time we couldn't. Our whole time was wasted in that way—trying every possible scheme to be left alone. *That's* what caused our restlessness.—Can't you see that?

LANGFRED. Perhaps!—Well, you know——

LYDIA. [*Interrupting him*] Let us go away from here, Langfred!—Yes, there is no other way out of it!—You and I—I and you—and stillness, stillness—nobody—no one else and nothing else—then you will see!

LANGFRED. I wish it were possible—for I am pretty far gone!

LYDIA. Let us go, Langfred!—Oh!—Oh, come down-town with me—at once!

LANGFRED. Down-town?

LYDIA. I'll just run in and change my dress, and then we'll go down-town and get ready.

LANGFRED. What has down-town to do with all this?

LYDIA. Why, I must have a few things for my travelling outfit.

LANGFRED. Haven't you clothes enough?

LYDIA. For travelling? No!

LANGFRED. [*Smiling*] And we who are going away to be alone——?

LYDIA. I fear you don't understand what an outfit implies?

LANGFRED. Yes! A lot of trunks! Big, cumbersome beasts! An infernal drag!

LYDIA. But there is something in all those trunks that can be turned into art. Almost in the same way as your bundles of musical manuscripts.—Tell me: what does a painter know?

LANGFRED. A painter? Not much, as a rule.

LYDIA. About his art, I mean—about his own art?

LANGFRED. Oh! I suppose—things about drawing and colouring——

LYDIA. And a sculptor?

LANGFRED. About lines and shapes.

LYDIA. And a musician?

LANGFRED. What in the world——?

LYDIA. [*Interrupting*] And a musician?

LANGFRED. Well—about tonality and——

LYDIA. An outfit is all that put together. A part of ourselves—that is, when we are wearing it. And we ourselves, you know—we ourselves——

LANGFRED. [*Kissing her*] Enchanting!—I'll go with you!

They are standing near the door at the right.

LYDIA. Now you have warmed up a little.

LANGFRED. You think so?

LYDIA. Well, not as much as you should!—I tell you—to love one like you is a terrible thing. Can you deny that?

LANGFRED. Yes.

LYDIA. I won't flatter you by setting you right.

LANGFRED. Good-bye then! [*He goes toward the rear door.*

LYDIA. [*Whispering after him*] You mustn't let your uncle know about this!

LANGFRED. [*Turning around with a smile*] Of course, uncle had to turn up at last! [*He starts to leave again.*

LYDIA. [*By the door at the right*] Are you going out that way?

LANGFRED. Is there another—that's available?

LYDIA *glides out backward to the right.*

LANGFRED *follows her.*

Curtain.

ACT III

A smaller room in the same hotel. There is a door at the back. To the right of it, a bed with a screen in front. Beside the bed stands a rather large, open trunk; also a hat-case. On a chair lies a plaid, with a suit-case placed on top of it, and on top of that again a hat. Nearer the foreground stands a "horse," on which rests a small case for music-books. A quantity of sheet music lies on the floor beside it.

LANGFRED KANN *stands by the case sorting out the music. Some of it he throws away, and some of it he puts carefully into the case.*

Against the opposite wall—that is, at the left—are a toilet table and a wardrobe. A table, with chairs around it, is near this wall, which has a door in the extreme foreground.

LANGFRED. [*As a knock is heard on the door at the left*] Come in!

DR. KANN. [*Enters, carrying a small box in one hand*] Well—? You're packing?

LANGFRED. [*Flustered*] There was a lot of music lying around since I was here before. It had to be sorted out sometime. [*He goes on with his work.*

DR. KANN. [*Who has made an excursion up to the big trunk and is now peeping through the half-open door of the wardrobe*] Why, you have cleared out the wardrobe, too?

LANGFRED. I got here last night, and I haven't unpacked yet.

DR. KANN. Here I have something for you. [LANGFRED *turns toward him*] You remember, we couldn't find any trace of your father's seal——

LANGFRED. [*Pleased*] Have you found it?

DR. KANN. It had been broken. Your father had just sent it away to be mended when he was taken sick. Somehow the address was lost at the engraver's. There was no call for it, and the man didn't know whose it was. Then he happened to get an order from me—and the same seal appeared on my letter. That's how it came to be returned. Here it is.

LANGFRED. Thank you ever so much! You couldn't have brought me anything more precious. [*He takes the seal out of the box and reads the motto on it*] LABOREMUS!—There it is!

DR. KANN. In our seal!

LANGFRED. In our blood, I hope!

DR. KANN. I am not here alone, you know. I have a young girl with me.

LANGFRED. Whom you went to London for—an American?

DR. KANN. No, she has only lived in America. She's a Norwegian.

LANGFRED. And speaks Norwegian?

DR. KANN. Of course. She's quite young. Only seventeen.

LANGFRED. Well, it's too bad—I haven't much time left.

DR. KANN. Oh, you haven't?

LANGFRED. Well, don't misunderstand me!—But what about the girl?

DR. KANN. I happened to tell her about the story of your "Undine."—You don't mind, do you?

LANGFRED. No-o!

DR. KANN. And do you know what she said?

LANGFRED. What?

DR. KANN. "It seems rather monotonous to me."

LANGFRED. And she is seventeen? But she is right. Is she clever?

DR. KANN. Rather original. "I know what an Undine is," she said. "I could tell him about one."

LANGFRED. She could?—Oh, she is thinking of some fairy tale.

DR. KANN. No, of an actual experience. "It might turn all his plans upside down," she said.

LANGFRED. We-ell? You've heard it, I suppose? Can't you tell me about it?

DR. KANN. Wouldn't you rather hear it from her?

LANGFRED. Well, can I?

DR. KANN. Of course!

LANGFRED. But when? At once?

DR. KANN. Why not? Could she come in here?

LANGFRED. Would it do?

DR. KANN. Do you think she's afraid? One who is American and Norwegian at the same time?

LANGFRED. Probably I am the one who ought to be afraid?

DR. KANN. [*As he starts to go out*] Yes, rather! She's in there. [*He goes out through door at the left.*

LANGFRED *makes haste to get things a little in order.*

DR. KANN. [*Is heard saying outside*] Oh, come now!

BORGNY *enters a moment later. She has on a black dress with collar and cuffs of lace, and resembles, in her features and the manner in which her hair is arranged, the portrait seen in the previous act.*

DR. KANN. [*Following her into the room*] May I introduce Miss Auclaire—my nephew, Langfred Kann.

LANGFRED. You are looking for something, Miss Auclaire?

BORGNY. I thought there must be a piano here.

LANGFRED. You play?

BORGNY. Not much. But I thought you played.

LANGFRED. I am only on my way through here.

BORGNY. You are going away?

LANGFRED. Yes—oh, not at once!

BORGNY. I had looked forward with such pleasure to hearing a composer play.

There is a knock at the door on the left.

LANGFRED. [*Impatiently*] I wonder who that can be?

DR. KANN. Oh, I think it's for me. If you'll permit me?

He goes to the door and opens it; a BELLBOY *hands him a card on a tray, and* DR. KANN *reads the card.*

BELLBOY. The gentleman says you are expecting him, sir.

DR. KANN. That's right.—You'll have to excuse me.

[*He goes out, followed by the* BELLBOY.

LANGFRED. [*To* BORGNY] Won't you sit down, please?

BORGNY. Thank you.

They seat themselves on opposite sides of the table.

LANGFRED. You have something to tell me, haven't you?

BORGNY. Can I go right ahead?

LANGFRED. If you please.

BORGNY. I want to tell you something that happened in my own family. A woman—one of the finest that ever lived—became very sick. She was confined to a chair or her bed. She couldn't do anything—couldn't play, though she cared more for that than for anything else—couldn't even have her daughter about her.

LANGFRED. Why couldn't she have her daughter about her?

BORGNY. Because her disease was infectious.

LANGFRED. Oh!

BORGNY. Her longing for music and for her daughter made her worse. The doctors decided that she must at least have music. The family was living in the country, but was very rich. So they made inquiries through the musical agencies for a fine woman pianist.

LANGFRED. But the disease was infectious?

BORGNY. That's why nobody would come for a long while. But finally they found one who dared.

LANGFRED. A good one?

BORGNY. An exceedingly good one—with a big reputation even.

LANGFRED. This is very interesting: music as a remedy against disease!—Well, how did it turn out?

BORGNY. Splendidly. The woman who came proved perfectly captivating. There was about her person and her playing something—something having almost hypnotic influence. The invalid took a new lease of life; her appetite improved; she became able to sleep. Her hold on life grew to such an extent that the doctors at last began to have hopes. People began to talk about it. This was a case where music actually had worked a miracle.

LANGFRED. That music has healing power—who can doubt it?

BORGNY. Another person besides the invalid was listening. A timid man, who was always hiding in a corner.

LANGFRED. The husband of the sick woman?

BORGNY. [*Nods assent*] Those two people had been living all by themselves on their estate. He wanted it, and she had let him have his way, although she herself had a lively temperament and was fond of fun.

LANGFRED. He was eccentric, I suppose?

BORGNY. He was a passive nature—living mostly in his own thoughts and out-of-doors. But he, too, loved music. So he took great pleasure in that woman's playing, and still more in the fact that his wife was recovering. He admired the artist, and his gratitude had no limits. She saw this—and she made use of it.

LANGFRED. To get around him?

BORGNY. She was skilled in that kind of thing, and he had no experience whatever. So he was easily captured.

LANGFRED. You don't mean——?

BORGNY. She wished no longer to cure his wife. Instead she wished to get her out of the way. She wanted to take her place.

LANGFRED. But the sick woman herself——?

BORGNY. Understood everything—oh, at once! She was a very spiritual, very sensitive nature.

LANGFRED. And didn't tell?

BORGNY. I wouldn't have done that either.—Soon she became incapable of doing so.

LANGFRED. In what way?

BORGNY. The other one was taking her strength away from her. Inch by inch! By means of her will, her eyes, her music—yes, she turned even the music against her.

LANGFRED. [*Rising*] Well, I never——

BORGNY. The poor invalid had long been giving her full confidence to one of the doctors, but he was away at the time. When he returned at last, she was too far gone to speak. But she wrote to him—a line now and a line then—and asked him to let her die.

LANGFRED. [*Gently*] And she did die?

BORGNY *answers with a nod.*

LANGFRED. To be so utterly heartless! To employ music like that! [*He takes a turn up and down the floor*] You shouldn't have told me this. I am the sort of fellow who never gets rid of a thing like that.

BORGNY. [*Rising and speaking very calmly*] Well, you shouldn't get rid of it.

LANGFRED *comes to a stop.*

BORGNY. Why, here you have your Undine!

LANGFRED. Undine? Like that?

BORGNY. As dark and as passionate—taking her colouring from her own element.

LANGFRED. So she does in my work, too. You needn't doubt that. But she isn't as cold as that!

BORGNY. The wave *is* cold.

LANGFRED. But she loves. And she wants to rise.

BORGNY. Yes. But whatever stands in her way she kills.

LANGFRED. [*In a flash of comprehension*] Of course!—In other words: he must be married?

BORGNY. Yes.

LANGFRED. The man whom Undine loves must be married—? Undine—one morning Undine sees them together on the shore. That's it! She sees them folded in each other's arms. Then she makes up her mind to kill—at once!—Good gracious!

BORGNY. She begins to flatter her, and tempt her.

LANGFRED. She pulls and pulls—they struggle—the dark voice and the white one. And then choruses of spirits—those of the sea, and those of the world above it. What colours!

BORGNY. But after that *he* must refuse to have anything to do with her.

LANGFRED. That's a foregone conclusion. Of course! Undine has violated laws that are unknown to her. She has closed to herself the world into which she wanted to rise. And cannot understand it.

BORGNY. So, I suppose, she is forced back into the sea?

LANGFRED. Back into the sea— Now the whole thing grows bigger, and those two incompatible elements [*As if speaking to himself*]— I must tell her about this at once.

BORGNY. Yes, I hear you are collaborating with somebody.

LANGFRED. Oh, no, I don't. I always work alone. But there is a person I consult with—a prominent woman pianist.

[*Those words, as he speaks them, seem to give him pause*] I want to tell her about it.—[*With a sudden change of tone*] And you are only seventeen?

BORGNY. I am older than that—seventeen years and three months.

LANGFRED. That's what I thought—that you must be older.

BORGNY. I should like to say one thing more.

LANGFRED. Why only one?

BORGNY. Because it's all I have to say.—He—I mean the man whom Undine loves—must be a dreamer.

LANGFRED. That's what I have him—a nature-lover.

BORGNY. A poet, for instance—or a musician.

LANGFRED. Why?

BORGNY. *Because such people are more easily captured!*

LANGFRED. And you are only seventeen years and three months old?

BORGNY. And five days!

LANGFRED. Oh, yes, that's what I thought: seventeen years and three months would not have been enough.—And you have absolutely nothing more to say?

BORGNY. Only a wish on your behalf: that the air may be clean where you are to work.—Good-bye!

LANGFRED. A very modest wish!

BORGNY. What more can you expect of one whose age is only seventeen years, three months, and five days?

[*She drops him a curtsey.*

LANGFRED. [*Simultaneously*] And five days!—I should like to know whether there are not a few hours to be added?

BORGNY. I'll go to my room and figure it out. Will you let me come back when I have done that?

LANGFRED. Why, certainly!

BORGNY. Then, perhaps, I might hear at the same time

what your lady has to say about the changes. You will tell her the story, won't you?

LANGFRED. Oh, what a question!—Is there really nothing more, then?

BORGNY. No, thank you! This will do.

[*She curtseys again.*

LANGFRED. But we'll see each other again!

He accompanies her to the door; when she has left and he turns around, his face is beaming with pleasure.

A knock is heard at the door in the back.

BELLBOY. [*Entering*] Madame Wisby asks if you are ready to go shopping with her.

LANGFRED. Ask Madame Wisby if I can see her. Tell her I want to speak to her.

BELLBOY. Madame Wisby is outside, sir.

He opens the door, which has stood ajar until then, and LYDIA *becomes visible. She wears a very elegant street dress and is just pulling on her gloves.*

The BELLBOY *leaves.*

LYDIA. [*Entering*] What is the trouble? Dr. Kann?

LANGFRED. [*As he goes to the door and closes it*] No, no, no! Something entirely different, indeed! [*Coming back to her*] It's about Undine. She has become more of a natural force. All the sentimentality is gone. She has become terrific—something huge!

LYDIA. A new subject?

LANGFRED. No, the old one, but expanded. The man whom Undine has fallen in love with—he who is to lift her up—he has a wife.

LYDIA. Is he to be married?

LANGFRED. Wait now! This is ever so much better. Just wait!—Undine sees them together on the shore.

LYDIA. Him and his wife?

LANGFRED. Him and his wife. She sees the wife caressing him. She sees him embracing her. She sees them walking away with their arms around each other. You can imagine her rage, can't you?

LYDIA. But this is something——

LANGFRED. No, wait now! Then begins the real story. Undine—she wants to have her own way, you know—wants it passionately! Undine can bear no resistance. All her host surrounds her. Next time the wife appears on the shore, siren songs rise from everywhere. Songs that tempt and pull. And out of those waves of melody rises Undine herself. A dark, rich voice—you can hear it, can't you? It proclaims nature—proclaims health for the wife, who is sickly and languid. Health is to pour in upon her from the sea. "Come," chants the chorus from every side—temptingly, oh, so temptingly. "Come," sings Undine, "and the sight of you shall once more please your husband: in my arms there is health waiting for you."

LYDIA. She kills the wi——

[*She checks herself in the midst of a word.*

LANGFRED. You are struck by that, are you not? *That* idea is one that opens new vistas. Of course, she doesn't realise what she is doing: she is Undine. And then he appears, just as it is happening. First he shows despair, then disgust, and then hatred. And Undine is horror-stricken. For it is something she cannot understand.—Then the choruses—the tremendous choruses—now they swell out. The chorus that represents Undine, that champions her cause and strives to carry her upward. And the chorus standing for the moral world—how it is gathering force. It comes on like a storm. It overthrows her, and all that is hers, amidst thunders and terrors.—Back into the sea with her!

[*After a pause, in a subdued tone*] I feel as if I couldn't wait to begin!

LYDIA. Where have you got hold of that idea? You haven't read it?

LANGFRED. No—a story I heard a few minutes ago—it came out of that. An actual happening. Something dreadful.

LYDIA. A story——?

LANGFRED. A story about a sick wife who was highly musical. They thought she might be cured by music. A wonderful idea, don't you think? And so they sent for a renowned woman pianist, who was to play for her—who was daily to pour out this draught of strength. And so she did with remarkable effect. The strength of the sick woman began to increase. It seemed to be nourished by the music—like a plant taken from the cellar and given light and air.

LYDIA. Wasn't that splendid?

LANGFRED. Splendid? You call it splendid? Do you know what she did?

LYDIA. The pianist?

LANGFRED. She killed that woman!—Just think: to have the power of restoring health by music, and to use it for the purpose of killing! She turned it in the wrong direction. She took away the husband. She took the life of her who was lying helpless. She took it by means of a thousand and one secret arts.

LYDIA. Who—who has told you that? Dr. Kann?

LANGFRED. Uncle? He hasn't said a word. Not a thing! My uncle seems to have become a fixed idea with you!—But can't you imagine the possibilities of orchestration around this new, white voice? The outcry of helplessness—the white lamentation of innocence. Then the cold cruelty of nature by which it perishes—the dark voice, you know.

LYDIA. But it cannot possibly have happened that way.

LANGFRED. What do you mean? What are you talking of?

LYDIA. She—the woman who was killed, as they say——

LANGFRED. The sick woman—? What makes you think—How *did* it happen?

LYDIA. How can I tell? How can anybody know such a thing? Can't you see that they have been fooling you?

LANGFRED. No— Who the devil would have an interest in doing that?

LYDIA. That anæmic woman whom they want to drag into your opera—what has she to do there? In the realm of natural forces? She—that sickly thing! She is to bring in a "white" colouring, you say? Colourless—that's what it will be. Moonshiny—just moonlight!

LANGFRED. You take sides *against* her?

LYDIA. With a man placed between those two—on one side that woman who can neither live nor die—on the other side one who is both whole and strong—do you want me to take sides with the sick one?

LANGFRED. But, Lydia——!

LYDIA. You want to force me to do so? To sympathise with her who could no longer be a wife—and who had probably not been so for many years!

LANGFRED. How do you know?

LYDIA. Why, you said so!

LANGFRED. Did I?

LYDIA. Or else it became clear to me while you were telling the story. It's a foregone conclusion.

LANGFRED. There is just one thing you forget: that other woman—the pianist—had come to the place to cure—to bring health to the poor sick woman through her music.

LYDIA. And while she was doing so the husband became attracted to her. That's easy to understand, I should say.

LANGFRED. [*Shows that he is controlling himself with difficulty; at last he manages to say*] But when she noticed that——?

LYDIA. Well, what then? I don't know what happened—but I imagine that she stood up for her right.

LANGFRED. Her right? Do you mean the right of a beast of prey?

LYDIA. Why isn't it possible to talk of this—of this thing that concerns neither you nor me—to talk——?

LANGFRED. Calmly of it? Well, if you have the stomach to do so, go ahead! [*Silence.*

LYDIA. You love only those who are fortunate, Langfred. Those whose powers are properly adjusted—so that they fit in everywhere.

LANGFRED. Is that so? Was that the reason why Undine became my first love—because her powers were properly adjusted?

LYDIA. No, I shouldn't say that exactly.

LANGFRED. Nor do I think you could say so— But, of course, all this is on the side. We were talking of the opera. You object to this change?

LYDIA. Object to it? That isn't strong enough: I hate it! All this sentimental stuff and nonsense!

LANGFRED. Sentimental? This!

LYDIA. What it comes to is a struggle between love and morality. Just as if we didn't have enough of that anyhow!

LANGFRED. I am not a philosopher——

LYDIA. Nor am I!

LANGFRED. But nevertheless I can see that in this way Undine is brought face to face with what *humanity* has gained. If she could grasp that—it would mean that she, too, *had* a soul.

LYDIA. What was it she should grasp?

LANGFRED. That human life is based on higher laws.

These she violates, and is repulsed. Can't you hear the swarming deeps gathering around her in uncomprehending onslaught? Hordes! And then the replies—the radiant replies from above—like a shower of lances burning with the light of victory! And the thunder!

LYDIA. That's getting too grand for me. What I could understand was her lack—what she suffered because of her environment—her longing to ascend toward what she could never attain—her craving after a higher form of life—her belief that she might reach it by making the soul of a man her own—and that through him she might win a share of life.

[*She is deeply moved.*

LANGFRED. It is there! And will always be! All of it!

LYDIA. Only that she may be betrayed! Only that she may be cast back into that out of which she strove to rise!

LANGFRED. Yes, because she tried to rise by means of a crime. Because she offended against the order of that higher world into which she wanted to rise. It cannot be done in such a way. That's the new element that has been added.

LYDIA. Crime—? I cannot see anything criminal in Undine. The tale of Undine stands for the yearning of all nature—for the vast love of what lies above—for that which saves, no matter what may happen.

LANGFRED. The sky reflected in the mirror of the sea—that's a dream only. A dream cannot save anybody.

LYDIA. Yes, if it is met by another dream of equal power! By a love so great that it can raise the blackest sinner up to itself. That it can take her in its arms and whisper: "By me you shall be cleansed! My eyes alone will do it—so full of kindness toward you they are. All that against which you have wounded yourself before shall now melt away. Nothing, nothing whatever shall be able to resist my hands when they are held out toward you. I shall carry you to where

the angels dwell. Even for that my love is strong enough. Yes, should it be demanded—should no other way be open to us—then I would die the death of atonement with you—holding you in my arms—and then they would have to let us pass."

LANGFRED. That is something I have read about.

LYDIA. It is the great love! That was what I wanted you to create in your work. It was in that love we met. [*With despair in her voice*] Why don't you remain faithful to it, Langfred?

LANGFRED. Because that story has been shattered for me—into a hundred thousand fragments.

LYDIA. In what way?

LANGFRED. Oh, that glittering disc of the sea, that blind natural force—Undine wanting to reach heaven—when you try to take hold of it in earnest, you can't do it. For then you find your way barred by everything man has achieved, by everything he feels and knows to-day.

LYDIA. [*With grief*] You cannot——?

LANGFRED. Nobody can: the distance is too enormous. Not a single change would suffice—but a hundred thousand changes in the course of millions of years—if such a creature is to reach heaven! There is no stroke of the bow that would tell such a tale. It is more than a modern imagination can accept.

LYDIA. [*Hopelessly*] Then you have abandoned Undine——

LANGFRED. That was *not* Undine. No, the one who kills mercilessly in order to have her way—that's the true Undine. Then you get the proper distance.

LYDIA. [*As before*] You won't, then? You won't, then!

LANGFRED. Bear in mind what life is. All imaginative creation is nothing, after all, but an enlargement or a foreshortening of life. For life is the only thing we know.

LYDIA. As if life didn't hold thousands who have done worse things to get up!—Oh, Langfred, Langfred!

LANGFRED. But they don't get up!

LYDIA. And you dare to tell me that?

LANGFRED. Not to heaven! Not to what heaven stands for in our minds!—Think again!

LYDIA. But that hysterical skeleton which is clawing at real, living life with her dry bones—she belongs to heaven, you think? That gasping thing that poisons existence with her breath—that creature of consumptive passion—is she going to heaven? Are the forces of life and nature's own power to be driven out by her? I hate her! And—I could hate you, too—indeed, I could—when you run astray like that and get yourself slavered over with all sorts of sentimentality. It's a treachery! Don't look at me like that! I could—I could——

LANGFRED *remains perfectly calm.*

LYDIA. Now you are thinking: "Is that you?"

LANGFRED. [*Quietly*] Yes.

LYDIA. No, Langfred, this is not I! It is only my despair! If you could understand—this inane talk of mine must make you understand—how dear our dream has been to me! And what might not have become of it, if we two had been allowed to work together—I don't mean together—but if I had only been allowed to watch you! Forgive me what I have been saying. All I want, don't you know, is to keep my hold—to cling to the fact that Undine's limitless love springs out of eternity and makes for eternity? Why should her faith be disappointed, Langfred?—Oh, you must save her, Langfred—also for my sake, in a way!

LANGFRED. Do you really want us to talk it over?

LYDIA. Yes.

LANGFRED. For, of course, we can hardly be said to have done so—can we?

LYDIA. No! I hope you'll forgive!

LANGFRED. And suppose we sit down?

LYDIA. Yes. [*She is about to sit down.*

LANGFRED. [*Pointing*] Over there, if you please.

LYDIA. Just as you say!

She seats herself on the chair he occupied while talking to BORGNY, *and he takes the chair on which* BORGNY *was sitting.*

LANGFRED. Everything has become so clear to me. Listen now. What Undine seeks is peace from all her longings, isn't it?

LYDIA. Yes, indeed!

LANGFRED. But one thing is certain: that if she takes his peace—then he has none left to give her.

LYDIA. But love?

LANGFRED. It is the same thing over again. He cannot take into his arms what would freeze him.

LYDIA. Do you think *she* is cold?

LANGFRED. I am thinking of that warmth which has gradually become a part of human life. She has nothing of that. It doesn't include her. He and she belong to different worlds. Thousands of years lie between them.

LYDIA. She doesn't feel in the same way as he—is that what you mean?

LANGFRED. She *cannot* feel as he does.

LYDIA. Not entirely, perhaps—what does it matter?

LANGFRED. Imagine a man with a mission to fulfil. And then, by his side, one who tries to stop him.

LYDIA. Why should she try to stop him?

LANGFRED. It is as if our mind were driving four-in-hand—and our imagination takes the place of the leaders. It is in

our imagination everything comes into existence—long before —long before we begin in earnest to analyse, to concentrate, to mould into shape. But just there—in our imagination—with the leaders—that's where everything is at stake. [*He speaks as if lost in reflection*] There—they must——

LYDIA. [*Tensely, yet timidly*] There—what about it?

LANGFRED. [*Decisively*] Nothing must stop them; nothing must lead them astray— Our imagination must have pure air to breathe. The air in every room must be pure.

LYDIA. We were talking about the feelings.

LANGFRED. [*As before*] And there must be peace—which is impossible when two people feel differently. [*Rising*] Those wrathful choruses of spirits from above—those should surpass anything I have ever done before!

LYDIA. [*Rising*] Surpass? That stuff?—When you distort a great classical theme by psychological pettifogging—when you try to modernise a venerable marble column, after fishing it out of the river where it has been scoured by sand and water for many thousand years—you'll never become great by surrendering to that kind of thing!

LANGFRED. And still less by not being true to my own feelings.

LYDIA. [*In a rage*] Oh, that Christian rant—! Is there anybody—? Is anybody listening at that door?

She goes quickly to the door at the left, opens it, and falls back with a heart-rending cry.

BORGNY *enters.*

LYDIA. That woman again! [*Going straight up to* BORGNY] Who are you?

BORGNY. My mother's daughter.

LANGFRED. What——?

LYDIA *loses all her strength. She walks slowly toward*

the door in the rear. At the door she turns around and gives a long look to LANGFRED. *Then she leaves.*

DR. KANN. [*Has entered in the mean time; now he puts his hand on* LANGFRED'S *shoulder*] Now you'll put all that behind you!

LANGFRED. But that cry, uncle—that heart-rending cry!

DR. KANN. Will pursue you for a long time—until it turns to music.

LANGFRED, *deeply stirred, is about to reply, when he notices* BORGNY *and checks himself.*

BORGNY. [*Embarrassed*] I can go to father now?

DR. KANN. Oh, you must. I'll stay here.

When BORGNY *has left,* LANGFRED *rushes into his uncle's arms.*

DR. KANN. You'll be able to work now.

LANGFRED. Not at once. Oh, not for a long time!

DR. KANN. Perhaps not—but all the better when the time comes.

Curtain.

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